Dragon Knights
Mineko Ohkami
TOKYOPOP

Dragon Knights

Written and Illustrated by
Mineko Ohkami

Volume 17

TOKYOPOP®

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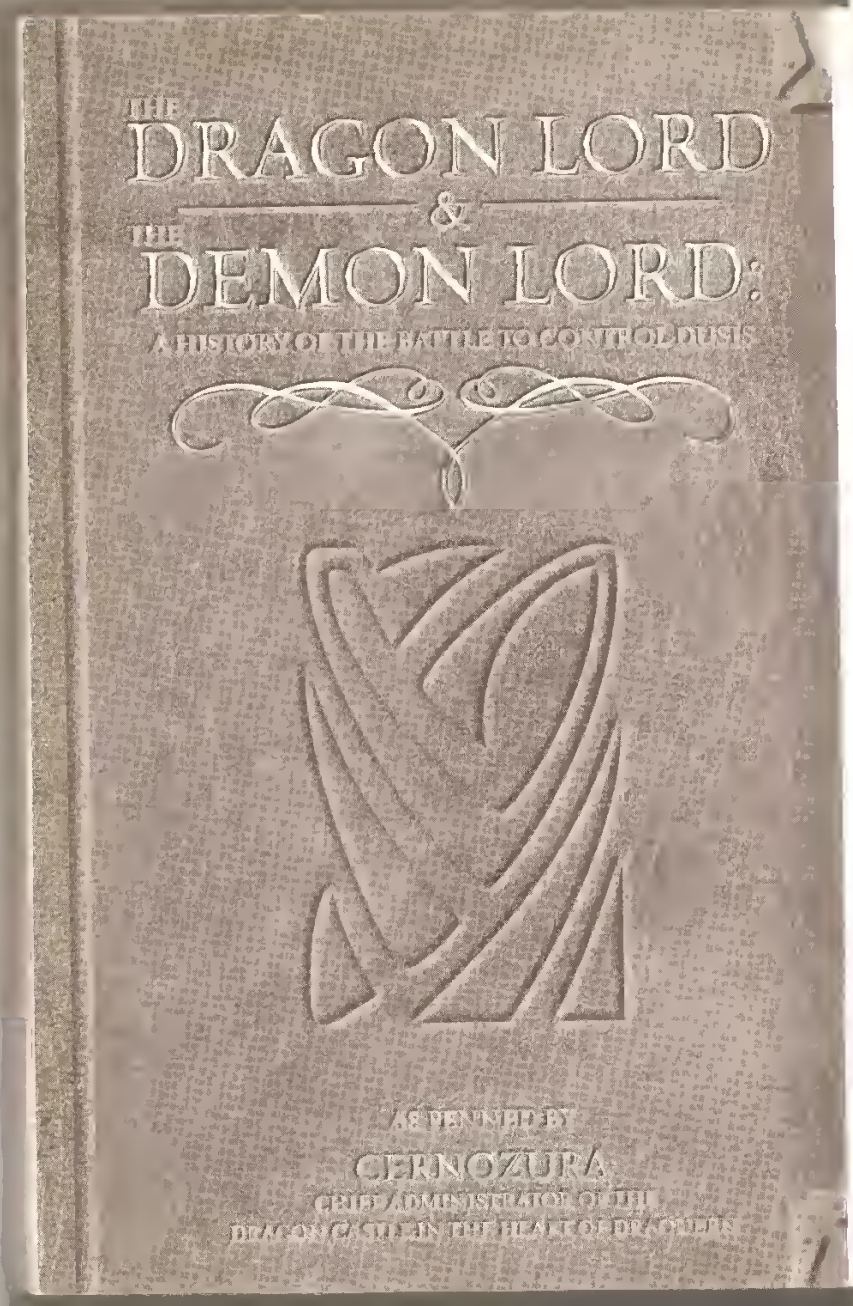

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A Quest of Uncertainty

Ruth and Thatz, meanwhile have carried on with the quest to save Cesia. Having been joined by the faerie Ringleys and Cesia's companion Zoma, the party of four have made good haste through Rainaldia but now their path seems uncertain. Nadil's palace waits in plain view yet something holds our group back. A mysterious fog surrounds the castle's foul walls, and while the haze looks the same as the mists that surround our island of Ruulta there's something different about it. Uncertain as to what it may be it's nevertheless powerful enough to stay our warriors' hands, and at last dispatch both Ruth and Thatz were locked in discussion about which course of action they should pursue, knowing that every minute spent in hesitation adds strength to Nadil's plot and might to his army.

Waiting just out of their periphery are Ritchel and Tintlet, who witnessed the abduction of Rune. They too seek access to Nadil's castle, and they bring with them the wind staff. While appearing to be no more than a simple walking stick the wind staff is a powerful weapon when placed in the hands of Cesia. Surely this weapon could do great damage to Nadil's army, but first it must be delivered, and if entering the castle seems beyond the means of two Dragon Knights, what hope do a simple thief and a faerie with no memory have?

The Keeper of the Tome

My name is Ceruozura and I am the chief administrator for the Dragon Castle, Dragueen in the heart of Dragoon, the Dragon Kingdom. Within these pages I will attempt to chronicle the events of yesterwear in the hopes that it will in turn offer some future understanding of the chaos that currently befalls us. I feel it's imperative that I record a comprehensive history of the events that have led to this dark hour, for I fear that none will remain to tell the tale. My only hope is that this tome may survive so that future generations will know of the valiance of the Dragon Tribe.

Rise of the Demon Lord

Our worst fears have come to pass. The Demon Lord Nadil has been resurrected, and he has stolen from the bosom of our care the fortuneteller Cesia, who harbors an incredible magic that we have only just begun to witness. In the service of a villain as pernicious as Nadil, Cesia, whether against her will or willingly giving in to the seductive charm of the dreaded Demon Lord, may prove to be the most dangerous threat we've faced.

Dragon Knights Divided

The Dragon Knights have been dispatched to Rainaldia, the kingdom of the Demon Lord, charged with rescuing Cesia. While their countrymen wait in terror, besieged by countless followers of the Demon Lord, our brave warriors have themselves been besieged by challenges grave enough to threaten their very existence. At last, one has proven too difficult to overcome, effectively cleaving our small band in two. Upon encountering his beloved Tintlet wandering the forests of Rainaldia, Rune made a horrific discovery. Intending to trap the Dragon Knight of Water and steal the power of Varawoo, the Monster Fish, from within him, the demon Lim Raana ravaged the faerie leader, robbing her of her spirit and memories. The body found by the Dragon Knights was nothing more than a hollow shell, and while Tintlet's spirit was soon found in the possession of Cesia's companion Zoma, Lim Raana still holds Tintlet's memory.

Lim Raana may be driven, but she lacks experience. Against one of Dragueen's greatest warriors, she stands nary a chance. Victory for Rune would have been certain were it not for the interference of Fedelta, one of the most powerful officers in Nadil's unholy army. Draining the brave Rune of his power, the Dragon Knight of Water quickly slipped into unconsciousness. Believed to be a prisoner of the Demon Lord, Rune will no doubt be kept alive long enough for the forces of evil to wrest Varawoo's power from him, but alive or dead his capture is a devastating blow to our kingdom. All of Dragoon solemnly awaits news of his fate.

The Villains of Dragon Knights

Nadil

The evil and justly feared Demon Lord Nadil had been slain by the Dragon Lord but his body was recently retrieved and resurrected by his loyal army Now he once again presides over the Demon Realm, hungry for revenge

Demon Officers

Shydeman

One of Nadils generals, Shydeman led the successful attack on Dragueen that brought back the Demon Lord

Shyrendora

Another general Shyrendora is sister to Shyde man and also to Tetheus who fights against her as one of the Dragon Officers.

Fedelta

Answering directly to Shydeman, Fedelta has become one of the most vicious officers in the Demon Army

Lady Medienea

Another officer in Nadil's army Medienea has an ongoing rivalry with Fedelta

Other Enemies

Bierrez

The infamous rogue demon, Bierrez's loyalties lie not with the Demon Lord but with himself.

Saabel

The so called "Collector of Corpses," Saabel possesses the ability to reanimate the dead into puppets he controls

Lim Kaana

A feisty little demon charged with stealing Varawoo's power from Rune

Khart

The Rankin Wizard, Khart is an al- [illegible] capable of creating [illegible] legions of them, including Rath

Garfakej

Khart's human assistant, Garfakej is [illegible] and malicious He wishes to [illegible] is easier Khart [illegible]

The Heroes of Dragon Knights

Lord Lykouleon

The beloved Dragon Lord Lykouleon is the sovereign ruler of Dragoon The resources of the Dragon Clan and the might of the Dragon Army are at his command

Lady Raseleane

Lykouleon's queen, the Lady Raseleane was rendered barren by the Demon Lord and unable to provide Lykouleon with an heir

Dragon Officers

Harnessing the power of the five Dragon Balls the Dragon Officers should number five strong but after the Demon Army's assault on Dragueen only two officers remain

Ruwalk

The Yellow Dragon Officer and Secretary of State

Tetheus

The Black Dragon Officer and Secretary of Security

Cernozura

The Dragon Castle Administrator Cernozura is also a self appointed castle historian

Dragon Knights

Rath

The Dragon Knight of Fire Rath is part Yokai and lives for killing demons

Thatz

The Dragon Knight of Earth, the human Thatz was once a thief, and his love for gold hasn t abated

Rune

The Dragon Knight of Water Rune is an elf and has abilities the other two Dragon Knights lack

Other Allies

Cesia

A half demon fortuneteller with the ability to enhance the power of those in close proximity to her

Zoma

Cesia s demon friend and companion

Tintlet

A faerie who has sacrificed much for her beloved Rune and her dying race

Kitchel

Another thief loyal to Lykouleon Kitchel possesses the powerful Three Treasures and is trying to get them to Dragueen

Ringleys

A faerie who was rescued from a demon and now accompanies Kitchel

Delte

Lykouleon s human fortuneteller

Star Princess

Not much is known about this powerful princess but she has assisted Rath on several occasions

Grinfish

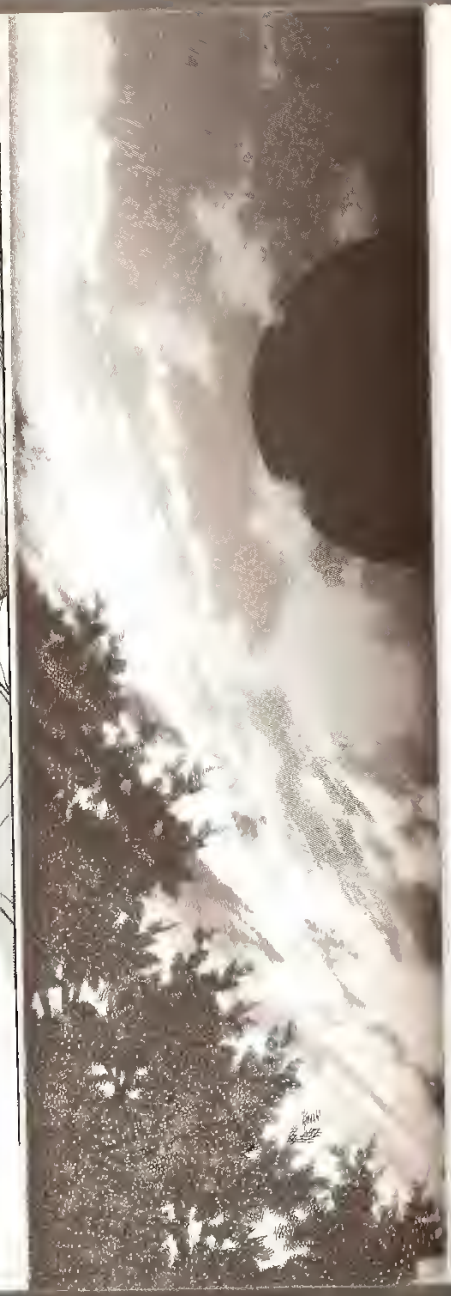
The Star Princess s bodyguard Both the Princess and Grinfish seem to be friendly to Lykouleon s cause

Nohiro

A human on a mission to save the dying faerie race. Has assisted Rune in the past

DUSIS
Mt Entraza
Yuba
GLACIOSA
Bertha Forest
KAINALDIA
Ripone
Cezarre
MEMPHIS
Nadil's Castle
Costa Rica
Misty Valley
Mirattl
HERMOSA
Fairie Forest
Chantu
Fiori
Fiori Forest
Ela
KUULTA
Draquen
DRAGOON
Luva
N
Cave of the Three Treasures
ARINAS

Dragon Knights: A World Away



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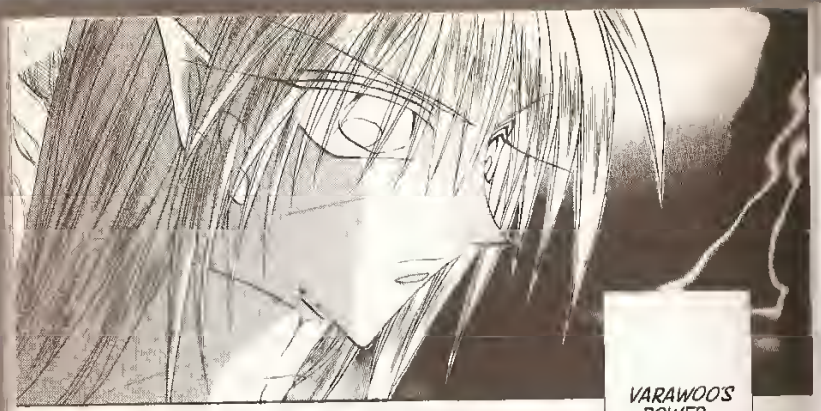


VARAWOO'S POWER...

THEY'VE SOUGHT IT BEFORE.

WITH VARAWOO'S POWER, THEY CAN OPEN A PORTAL TO THE DRAGON REALM...

...AND DROWN DRAQUEEN.

WHAT NOW?

THE PLAN WAS A FAILURE THE FIRST TIME. WHY RESURRECT IT?

DRAGON KNIGHTS

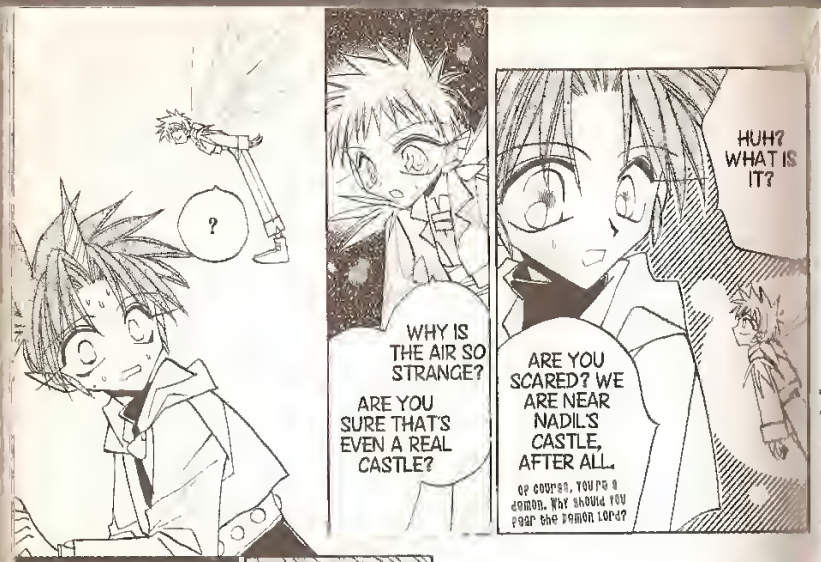
ドラゴン騎士団

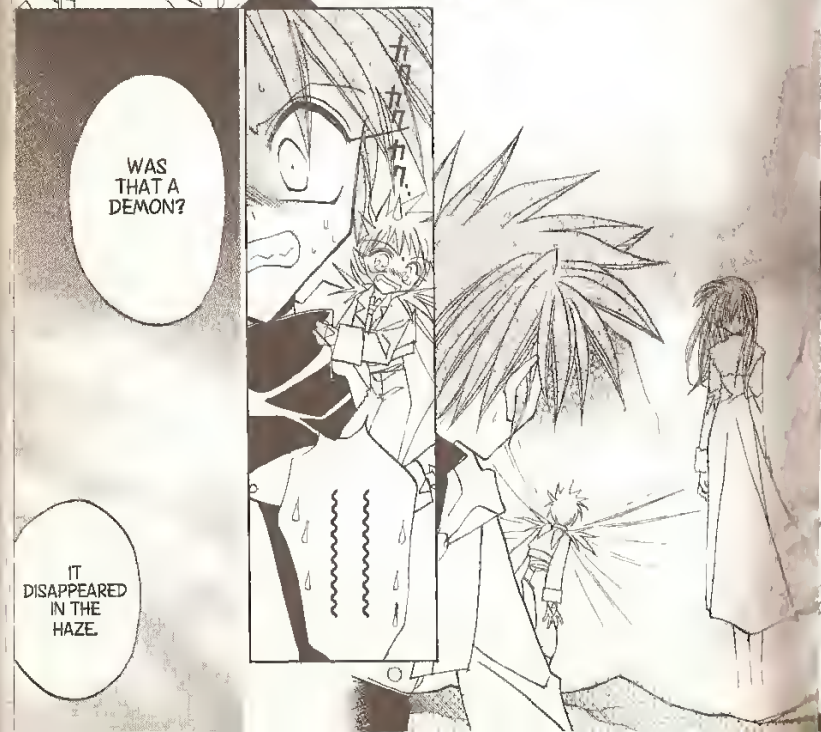
A World Away

STAY HERE, TINTLET.
NO POINT IN ALL OF US GETTING CAUGHT.
.....
BUT...

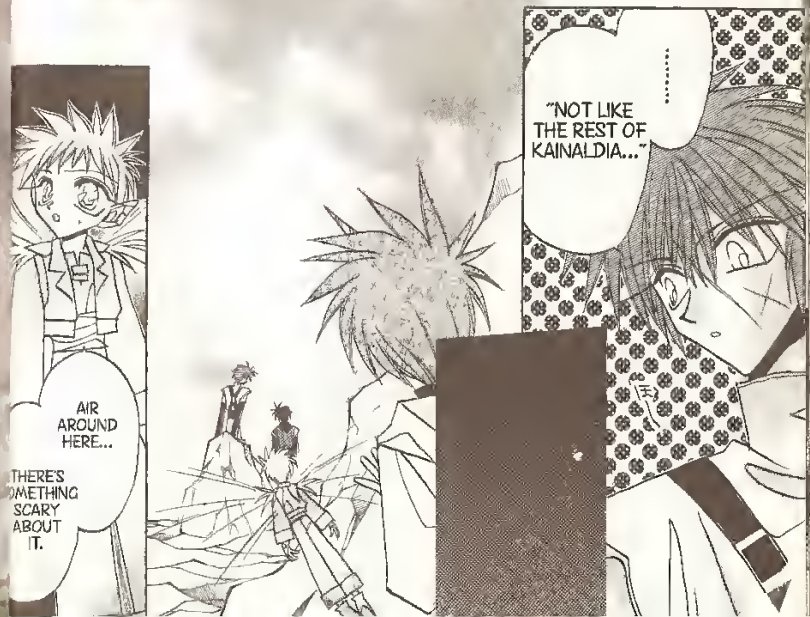
THE THREE TREASURES...
THEY'RE STILL IN MY BACKPACK...
...AND I HAVE TO BRING THEM BACK TO DRAQUEEN.
I CAN'T AFFORD TO GET CAUGHT HERE.

LET ME GET THIS STRAIGHT.
WHAT YOU'RE SAYING IS...
THE HAZE JUST SEEMS TO GET THICKER AND THICKER.
I'M NOT SURE THE BOAT WOULD EVEN FLOAT. THAT ISN'T WATER.
IT ALMOST SEEMS ALIVE.
...IF WE TRIED TO CROSS THE LAKE BY BOAT...
...WE'D GET CAUGHT IN THIS WHITE HAZE, RIGHT?


?
WHY IS THE AIR SO STRANGE?
ARE YOU SURE THAT'S EVEN A REAL CASTLE?
HUH? WHAT IS IT?
ARE YOU SCARED? WE ARE NEAR NADIL'S CASTLE, AFTER ALL.
Of course, you're a demon. Why should you fear the demon lord?

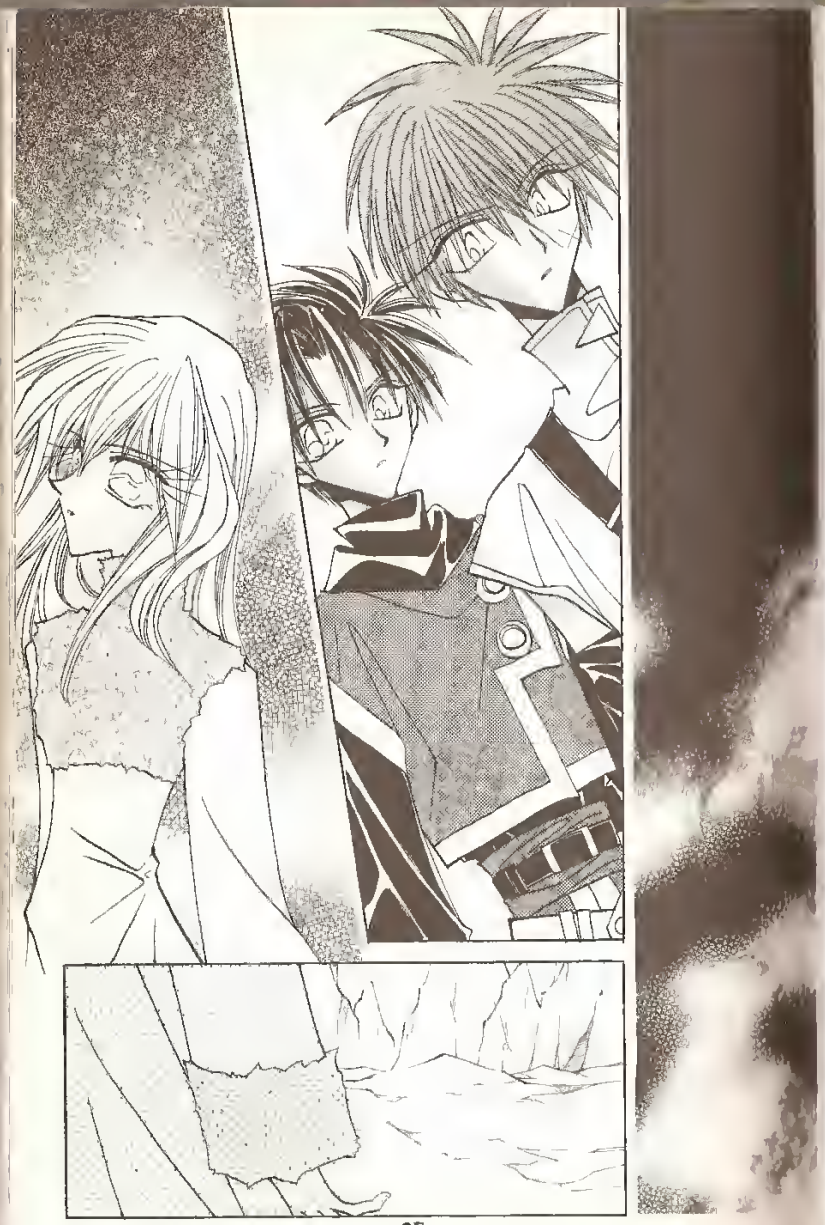

WAS THAT A DEMON?
IT DISAPPEARED IN THE HAZE.
カカカカ…

YEAH, YOU'RE RIGHT.
ALIVE..
THIS HAZE, IT'S NOT LIKE THE REST OF KAINALDIA...
WHEN I PULLED MY HAND BACK, I FELT IT PULL BACK AS WELL.


AIR AROUND HERE...
THERE'S SOMETHING SCARY ABOUT IT.
"NOT LIKE THE REST OF KAINALDIA..."
……

I THOUGHT
I WAS DEAD.

THATZ!
RATH!!
EXACTLY MY POINT.
IT MIGHT WORK.
WHO KNOWS?
THIS IS KAINALDIA, AFTER ALL.
...WE COULD REACH THE CASTLE.
MAYBE IF WE WENT INTO THE HAZE...
WHAT DO YOU THINK?
LOOK!
OVER THERE!
LOOK OVER THERE!

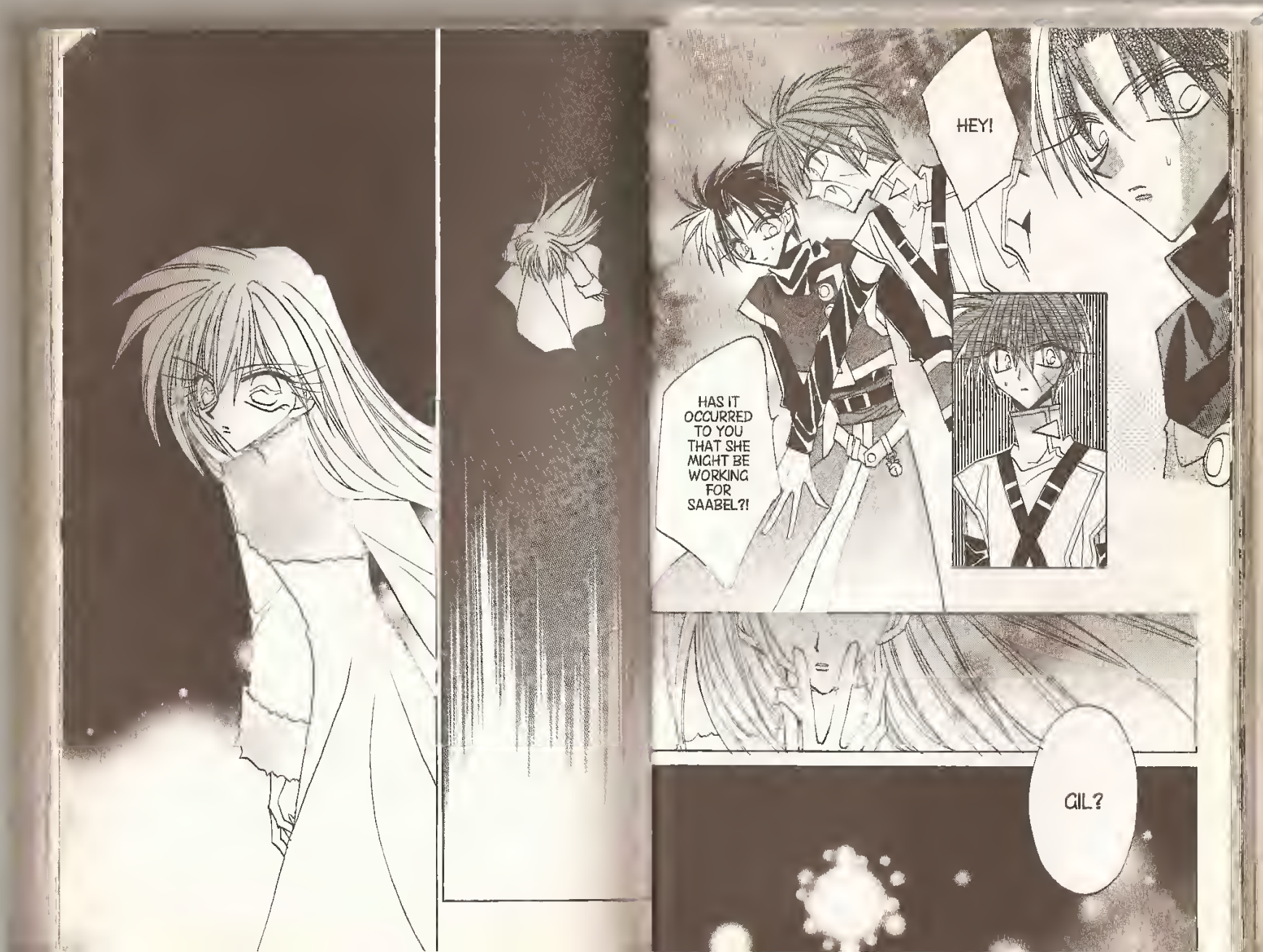


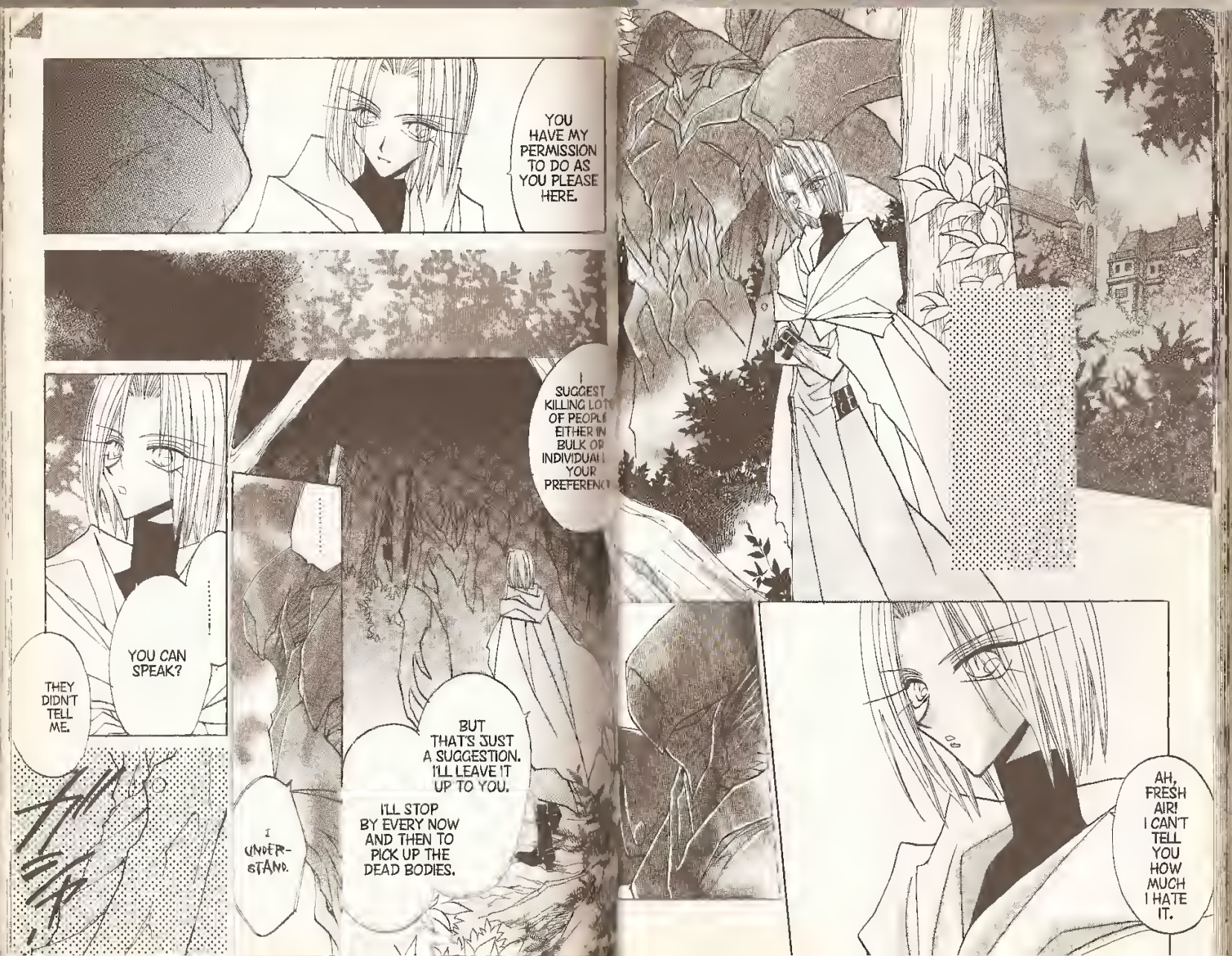
YAAH!
HEY!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING, RATH?
WAIT A SECOND.
I KNOW THAT GIRL.
He knows her?
HUH?

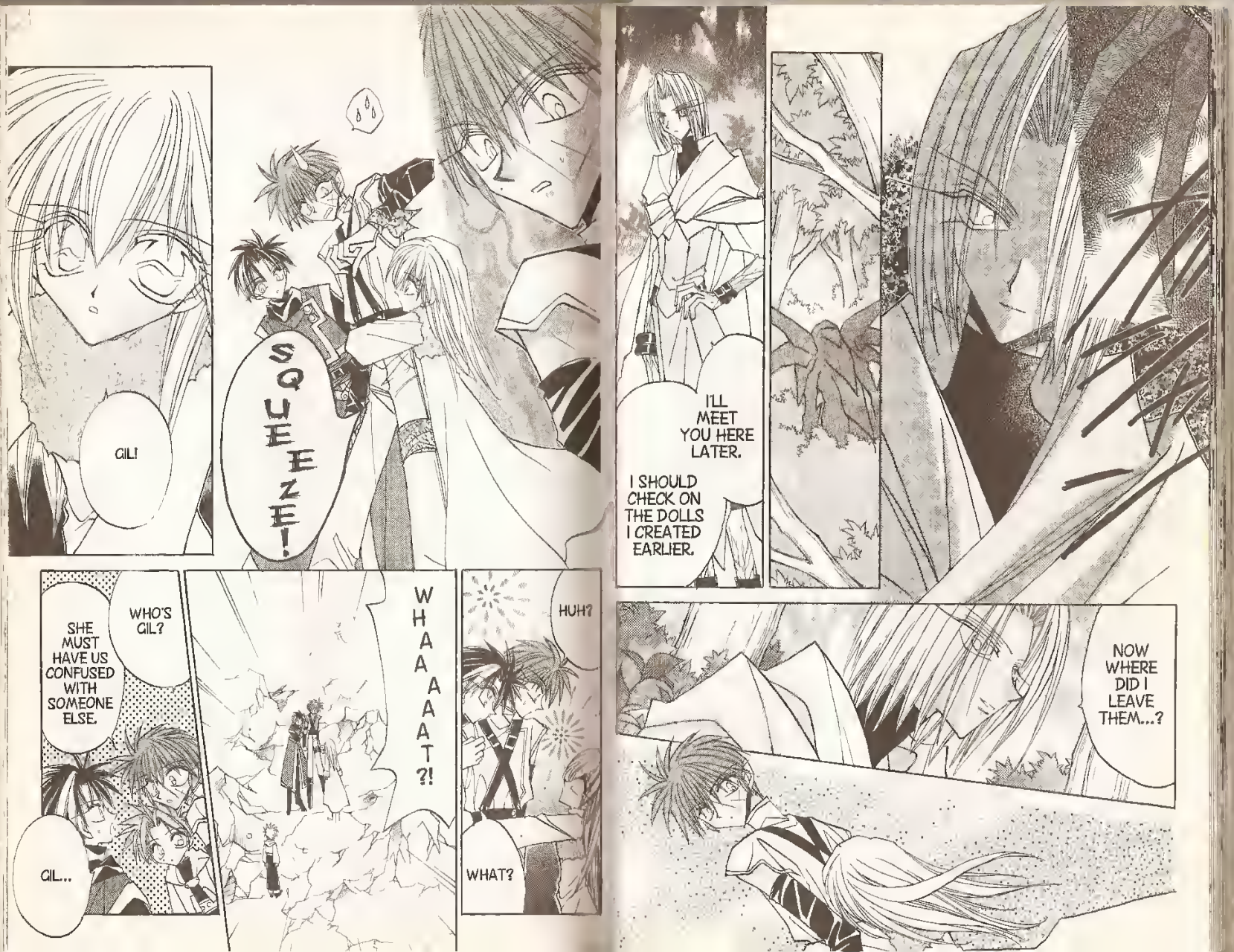
!
WHO IS SHE?
SHE...
SHE JUST SUDDENLY APPEARED BEHIND US!
A DEMON?
!!

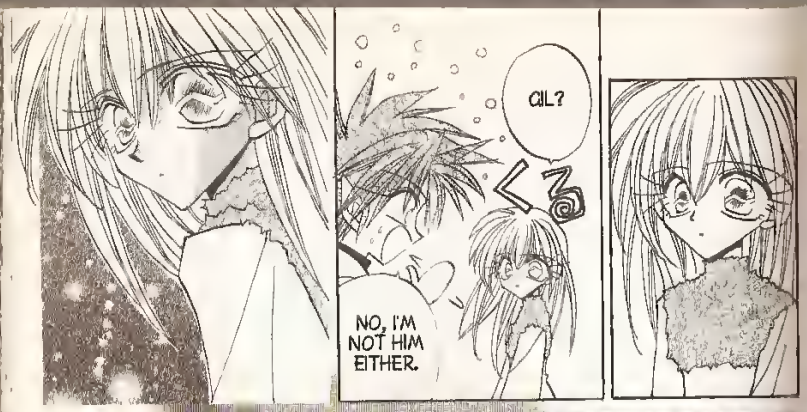
WHY ARE YOU GETTING SO WORKED UP, THATZ?
ARE YOU TELLING ME THAT WE HAVE A GHOST ON OUR HANDS?! OR MAYBE EVEN A ZOMBIE?!
IT HAS TO DO WITH THIS PLACE!
OH NO!
IT'S SAABEL!
DON'T YOU THINK THAT'S STRANGE?
WHY DO YOU THINK, MORON?! WE'RE TALKING ABOUT WALKING CORPSE
HOLD ON A SECOND. THINK ABOUT IT. WE'RE IN KAINALDIA.
NOT NECES-SARILY.
DON'T YOU THINK IT'S STRANGE THAT YOUR FRIEND WOULD BE HERE?
YES, I KNOW HER.
SHE DIED.
OH, AND ONE MORE THING...
DID I HEAR YOU RIGHT? DID YOU SAY YOU KNEW THAT GIRL?
ARE YOU TWO FRIENDS OR SOMETHING?
Is it true? WHO IS SHE? Rath knows her?
WHEN I KNEW HER...
...SHE WAS MUCH YOUNGER.

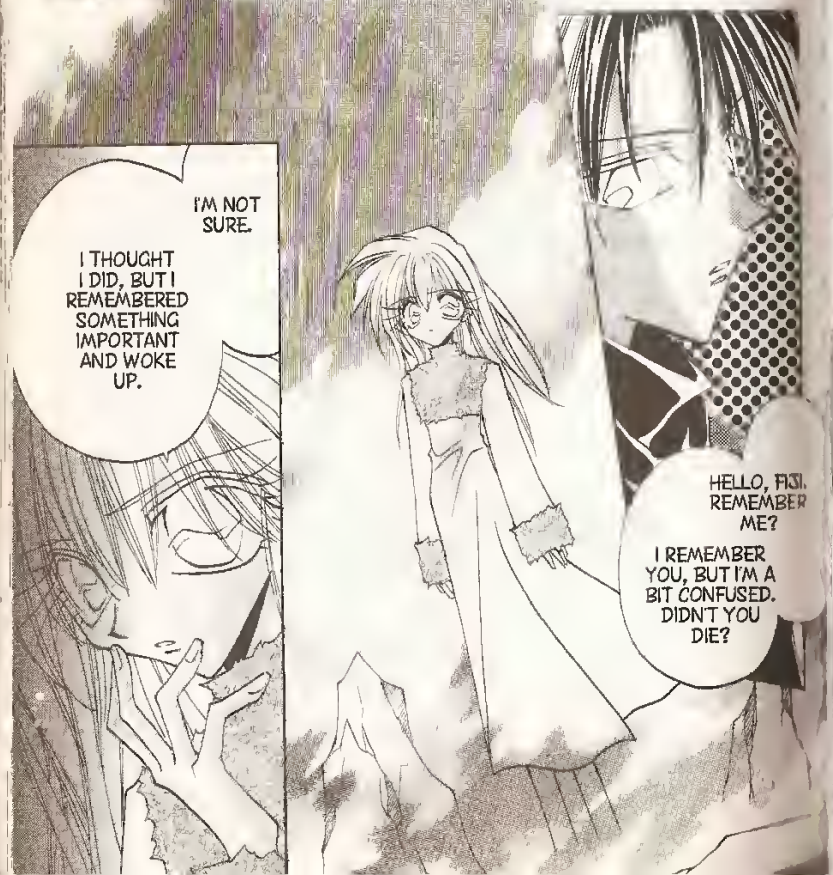
FIJI?
WHAT IF SHE'S ONE OF SAABEL'S DOLLS? OR THAT DEMON WHO PRETENDED TO BE TINTLET?
FIJI...
FIJI!
YOU'D BETTER NOT START ACTING LIKE KAI-STERN.
or I'm gonna start hating you.
.....
HMM...
FIJI?
He's too trusting.
YOU ALREADY FELL INTO ONE TRAP SET BY A CUTE GIRL, NOW YOU'RE WALKING RIGHT INTO ANOTHER ONE.
HEY, FIJI!

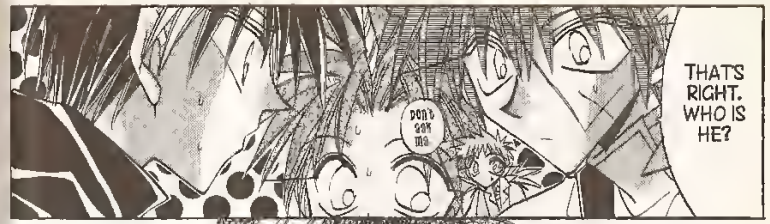

HEY!
HAS IT OCCURRED TO YOU THAT SHE MIGHT BE WORKING FOR SAABEL?!
GIL?


YOU HAVE MY PERMISSION TO DO AS YOU PLEASE HERE.
I SUGGEST KILLING LOTS OF PEOPLE EITHER IN BULK OR INDIVIDUALLY YOUR PREFERENCE.
.....
YOU CAN SPEAK?
THEY DIDN'T TELL ME.
BUT THAT'S JUST A SUGGESTION. I'LL LEAVE IT UP TO YOU.
I'LL STOP BY EVERY NOW AND THEN TO PICK UP THE DEAD BODIES.
I UNDER-STAND.
AH, FRESH AIR! I CAN'T TELL YOU HOW MUCH I HATE IT.


I'LL MEET YOU HERE LATER.
I SHOULD CHECK ON THE DOLLS I CREATED EARLIER.
NOW WHERE DID I LEAVE THEM...?
GIL!
SQUEEZE!
HUH?
WHAAAAAT?!
WHAT?
WHO'S GIL?
SHE MUST HAVE US CONFUSED WITH SOMEONE ELSE.
GIL...

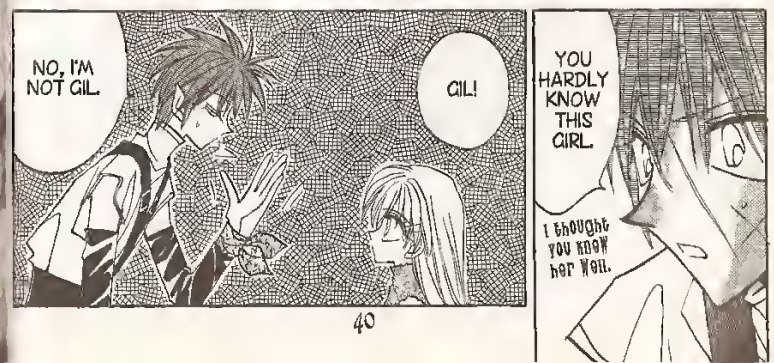

GIL?
NO, I'M NOT HIM EITHER.

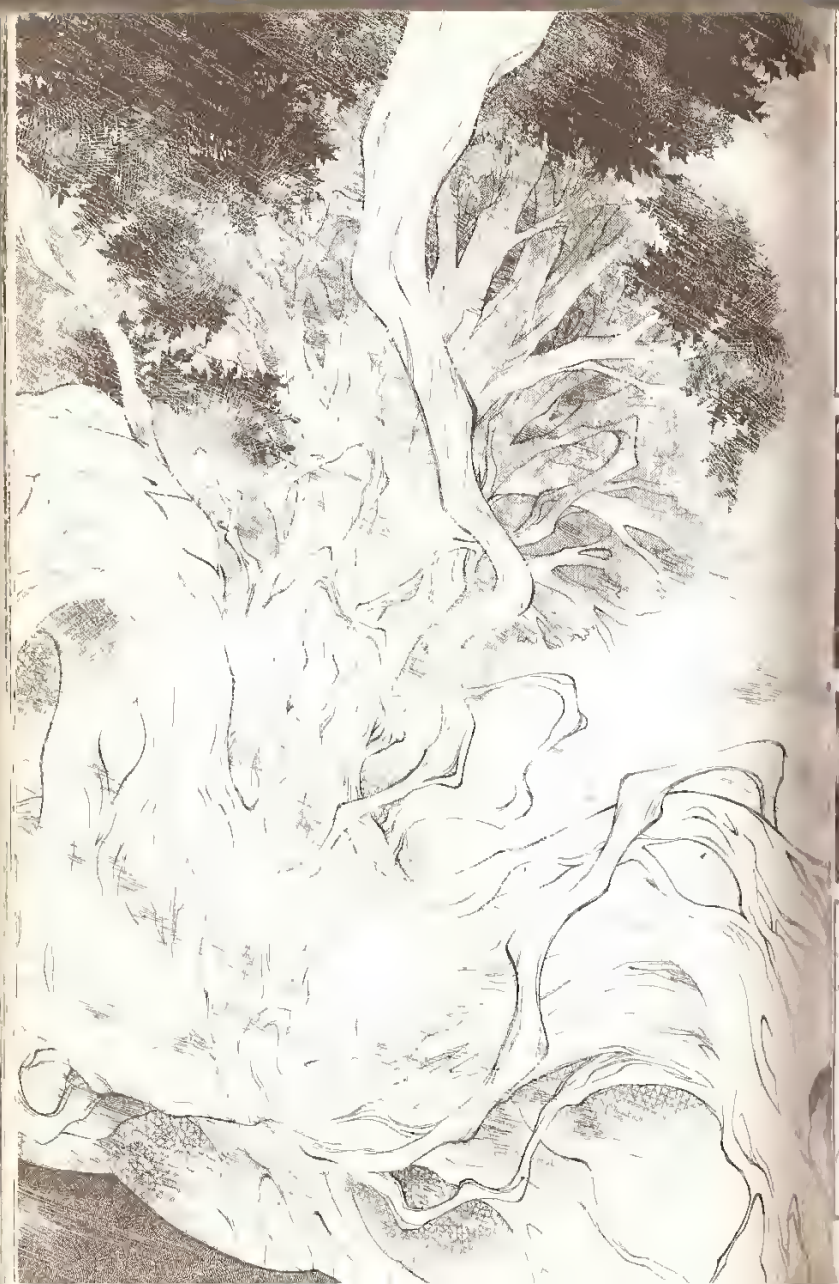

I'M NOT SURE.
I THOUGHT I DID, BUT I REMEMBERED SOMETHING IMPORTANT AND WOKE UP.
HELLO, FUJI. REMEMBER ME?
I REMEMBER YOU, BUT I'M A BIT CONFUSED. DIDN'T YOU DIE?


don't say no.
THAT'S RIGHT. WHO IS HE?

Wasn't Kai-storm there, too?
I was too busy with my own problems at that time.
YOU KNOW...
...I REALLY CAN'T REMEMBER.

sorry.
Oh.


NO, I'M NOT GIL.
GIL!
YOU HARDLY KNOW THIS GIRL.
I thought you knew her well.



YES... MAYBE... I'M NOT SURE.
BUT IT PROB-ABLY WAS.
IS SHE DEAD OR NOT?
WAS IT A MESSAGE FOR GIL?
IS THAT WHY YOU'RE LOOKING FOR HIM?
IF SHE'S DEAD, SHE COULDN'T HAVE GOTTEN HERE BY HERSELF.
SHE'S LOOKING FOR SOMEONE HERE IN KAINALDIA?
!?
CRRRRKKK

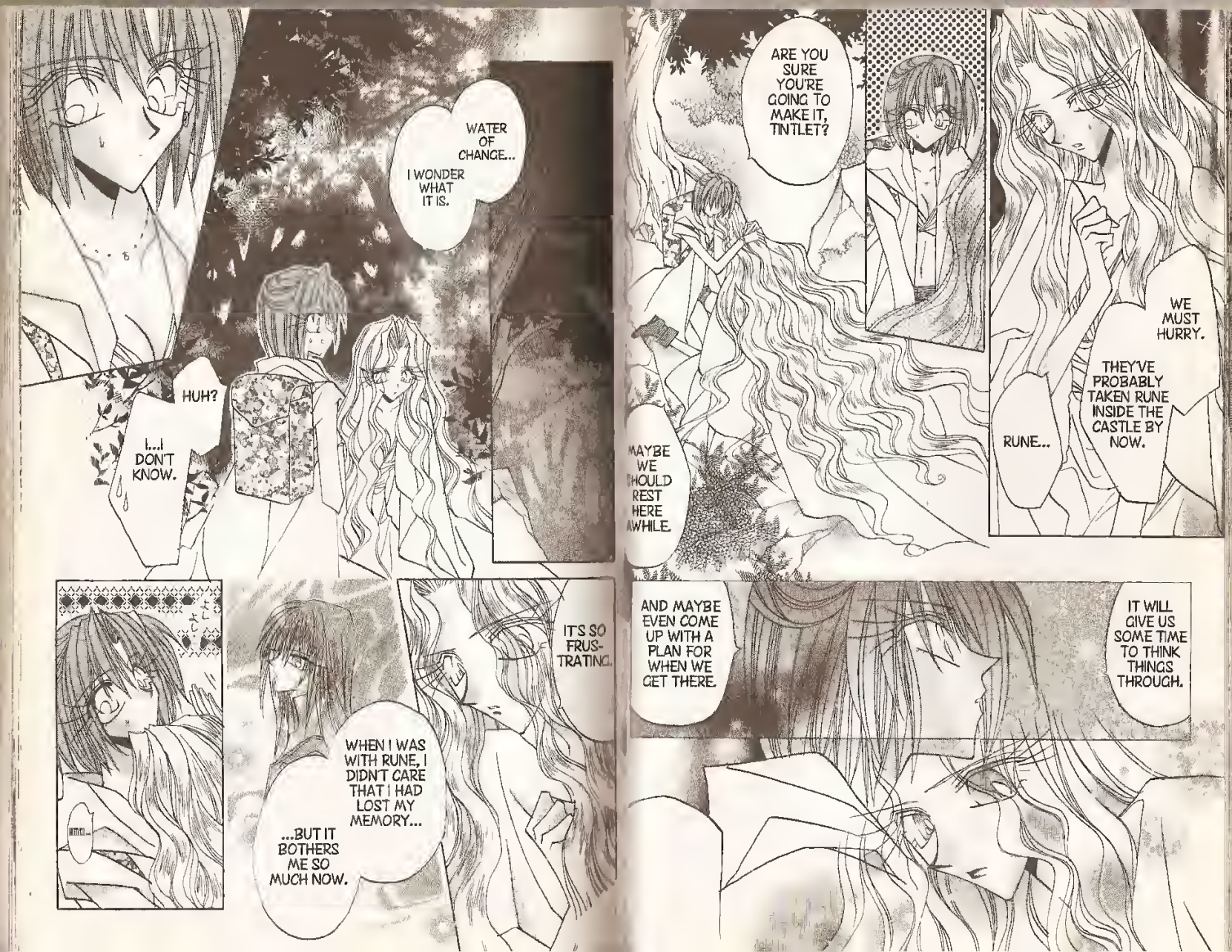
A DEMON!
GET OVER HERE!
THEY CAN SEE US. WE'VE GOTTA HIDE!
IT'S HUGE.
HURRY UP!
I WONDER IF THAT THING'S HEADING TO THE PALACE.
SCAMPER
SCAMPER
WE SHOULD SEE IF IT GOES THROUGH THE HAZE...OR IF IT TAKES ANOTHER ROUTE TO THE CASTLE.

IT'S BETTER THAN PLOWING THROUGH IT OURSELVES, RIGHT?
WHAT?
WAIT A MIN-UTE!
LOOK OVER THERE!
THAT LOOKS LIKE...
THAT'S RUNE!!
WHAT?

YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING!
RUNE?!

THAT WAS MR. RUNE! I'M SURE OF IT!
IT...
... VANISHED.
NOW YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT TRAPS?!
WAS THAT REALLY RUNE?
WHAT IF IT'S A TRAP?
IF THAT'S RUNE...
...THEN WHAT HAPPENED TO TINTLET?

WHAT WAS IT?
WHAT WAS SO IMPORTANT?
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
BUT... COULD YOU... SLOW DOWN?
OH! I'M SO SORRY.
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, TINTLET?
UH... YES.
THEY WERE WITH KITCHEL, WEREN'T THEY? RUNE MUST HAVE LEFT TINTLET WITH HER.
BUT IF RUNE'S BEEN CAPTURED...
...IT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER NOW.
HEY!!
I KNEW HE'D BE LIKE THIS.
RUNE WENT THROUGH IT. IT'S SAFE.
BUT HE HAD A DEMON WITH HIM!
RATH, WE CAN'T GO RUSHING INTO THIS!
WE DON'T KNOW IF THAT HAZE IS SAFE!


WATER OF CHANGE...
I WONDER WHAT IT IS.
HUH?
I...I DON'T KNOW.
ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE GOING TO MAKE IT, TINTLET?
WE MUST HURRY.
THEY'VE PROBABLY TAKEN RUNE INSIDE THE CASTLE BY NOW.
RUNE...
MAYBE WE SHOULD REST HERE AWHILE.
AND MAYBE EVEN COME UP WITH A PLAN FOR WHEN WE GET THERE.
IT WILL GIVE US SOME TIME TO THINK THINGS THROUGH.
IT'S SO FRUS-TRATING.
WHEN I WAS WITH RUNE, I DIDN'T CARE THAT I HAD LOST MY MEMORY...
...BUT IT BOTHERS ME SO MUCH NOW.
HMM...

There's a serious meeting in progress...

And you have one of those just lying around, do you?

How about tossing a human-sized doll into the haze?

That's not a good idea.

Why me?

We should just send ringlers to the castle to check it out.

The branch was too light. Let's try something heavier.

WE DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS!

がっしゃん!

OH, DAMMIT ALL!!!

WE SHOULD THINK THINGS THROUGH. RUNE'S ALREADY BEEN CAPTURED.

FINE! I GET IT! NOW, WHAT'S THE PLAN?!

DESPERATE TIMES CALL FOR DESPERATE MEASURES

THE CASTLE...

WATER OF CHANGE...

WE NEED TO GET TO THE CASTLE FIRST, THEN WE CAN CATCH THAT DEMON...

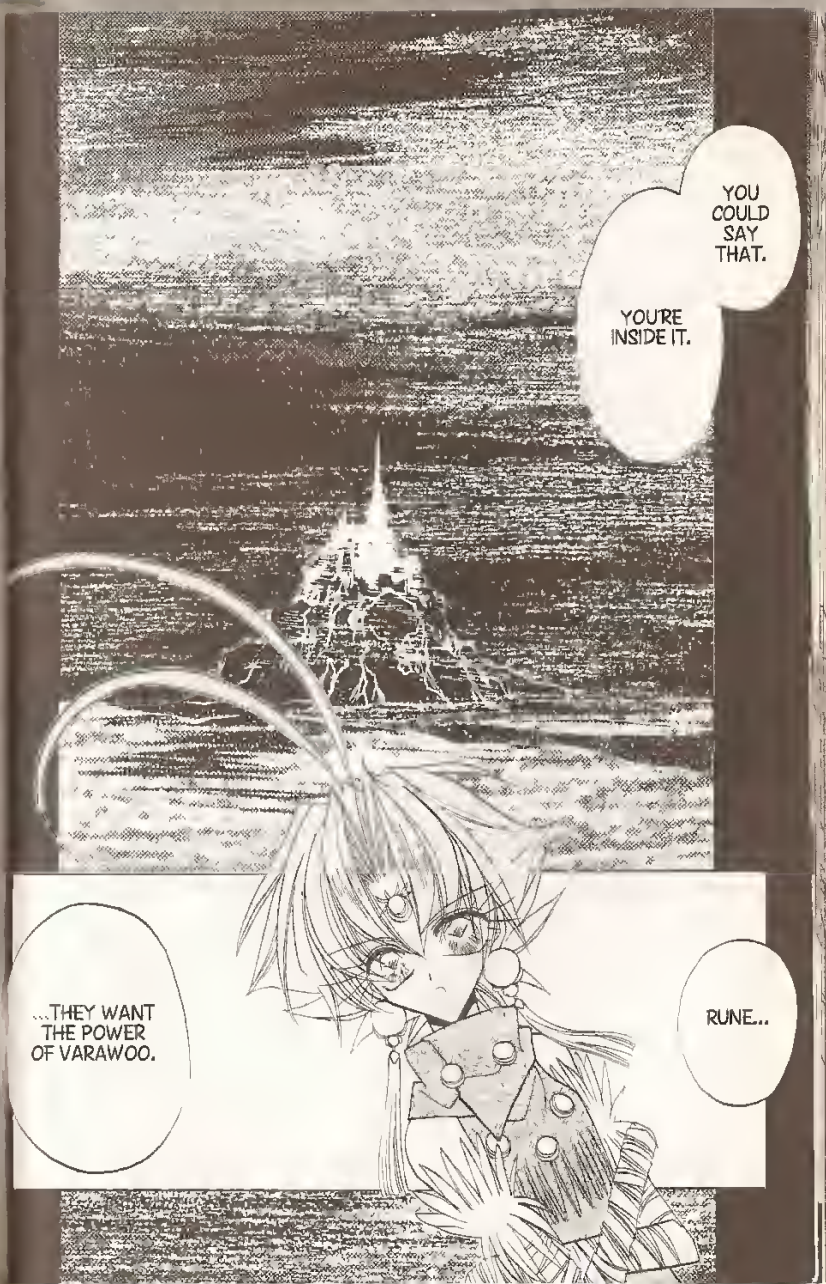
...AND GET TINTLET'S MEMORIES BACK.

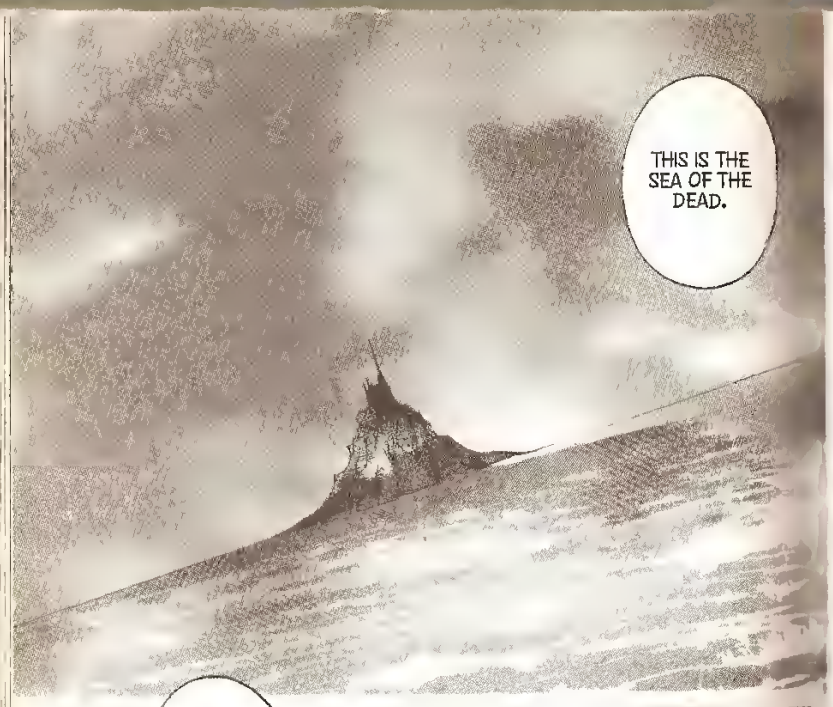
WHICH IS EXACTLY WHY WE NEED TO ACT QUICKLY.
PLEASE WAIT.
FIJI...
WE TOTALLY FORGOT ABOUT HER.
I CAN HELP.
I CAN TAKE YOU TO THE POINTED ISLAND.
すたすた…
ARE YOU SERIOUS?! WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY SOMETHING EARLIER?
HEY!

WHY AM I...?
I JUST REMEMBERED...
...THE THING THAT I NEEDED TO DO.
SINCE YOU AREN'T A DEMON, IT WAS TOO DANGEROUS FOR YOU TO CROSS THE SEA OF THE DEAD ON YOUR OWN
THAT'S WHY I HAD TO ACCOMPANY YOU.
I WANT TO MAKE SOMETHING VERY CLEAR.

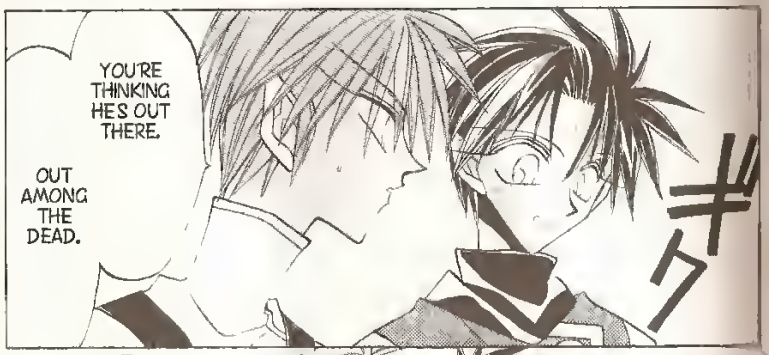
LIM KAANA!!
ANYHOW, MY JOB IS DONE.
IF WE JUST CROSSED THE OCEAN, THEN I MUST BE NEAR THE PALACE.
THE OCEAN OF DEAD SOULS SURROUNDS NADIL'S CASTLE.
THE OCEAN OF DEAD SOULS THAT SURROUNDS NADIL'S CASTLE.
IF ANYTHING LIVING TRIES TO CROSS THE OCEAN, THE SOULS WILL ATTACK IT. IT'S NOT PERSONAL. THEY JUST WANT THE BODY.
SEA OF THE DEAD?
YOU HAVE FEDELTA TO THANK FOR SAVING YOUR LIFE. HE'S ALLOWING YOU TO LIVE SINCE YOU POSSESS THE POWER OF VARAWOO.
IF IT WERE UP TO ME, YOU'D BE DEAD.
ONLY NADIL'S ARMY CAN CROSS IT...OR THEIR PRISONERS.
THE SEA OF THE DEAD WAS SAABEL'S LITTLE PROJECT.

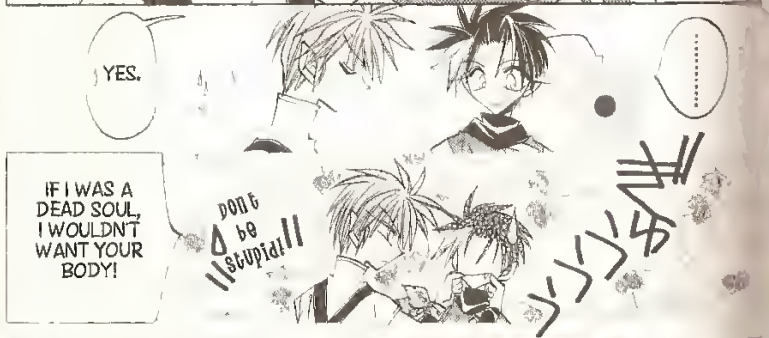
DOES IT HAVE TO DO WITH GIL?
I CAN TAKE YOU THERE.
I REMEMBER WHAT IT IS I NEED TO DO.


YOU COULD SAY THAT.
YOU'RE INSIDE IT.
...THEY WANT THE POWER OF VARAWOO.
RUNE...


THIS IS THE SEA OF THE DEAD.
IT'S A PRISON, OF SORTS.
A PLACE WHERE DEAD SOULS WANDER ABOUT...
...IN SEARCH OF A LIVING BODY.

I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING.


YOU'RE THINKING HE'S OUT THERE.
OUT AMONG THE DEAD.
ギク


YES.
IF I WAS A DEAD SOUL, I WOULDN'T WANT YOUR BODY!
Don't be D Stupid!!
……
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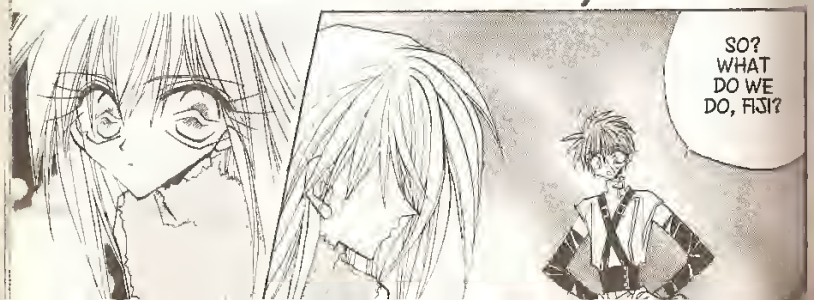
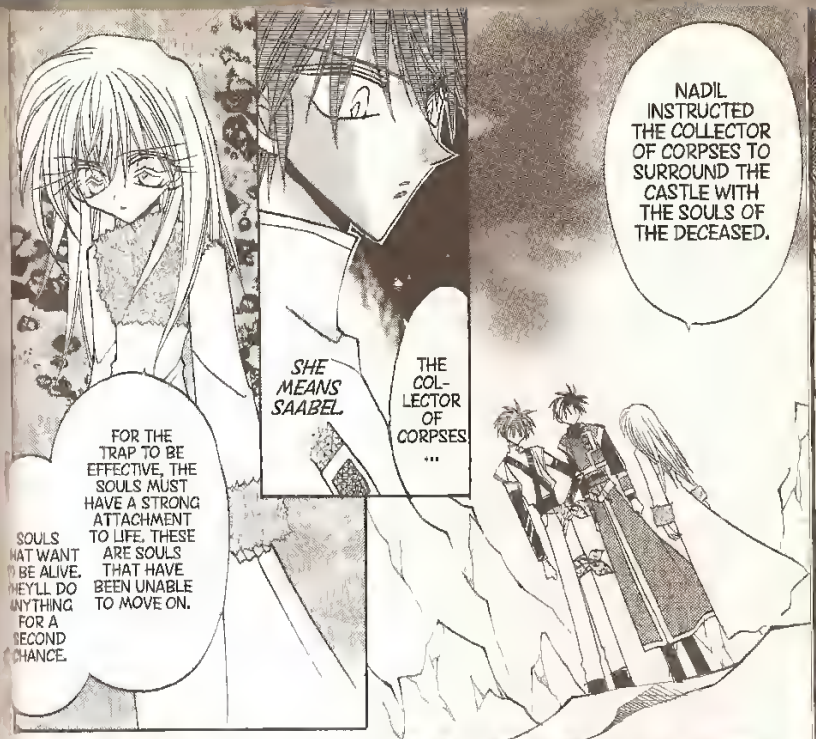
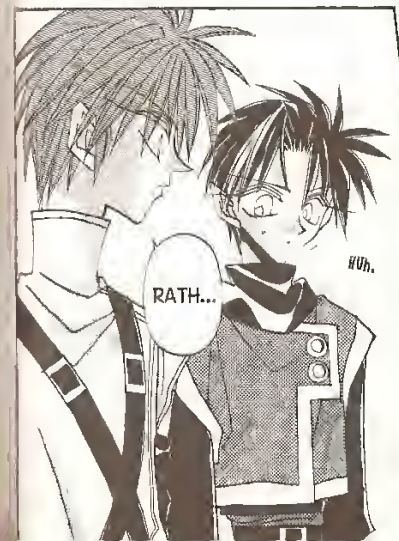
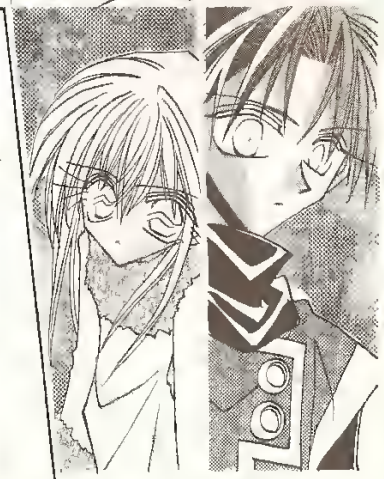

SO? WHAT DO WE DO, FIJI?


NADIL INSTRUCTED THE COLLECTOR OF CORPSES TO SURROUND THE CASTLE WITH THE SOULS OF THE DECEASED.
THE COL-LECTOR OF CORPSES ...
SHE MEANS SAABEL.
FOR THE TRAP TO BE EFFECTIVE, THE SOULS MUST HAVE A STRONG ATTACHMENT TO LIFE. THESE ARE SOULS THAT HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO MOVE ON.
SOULS HAT WANT O BE ALIVE. HEY'LL DO NYTHING FOR A ECOND HANCE.

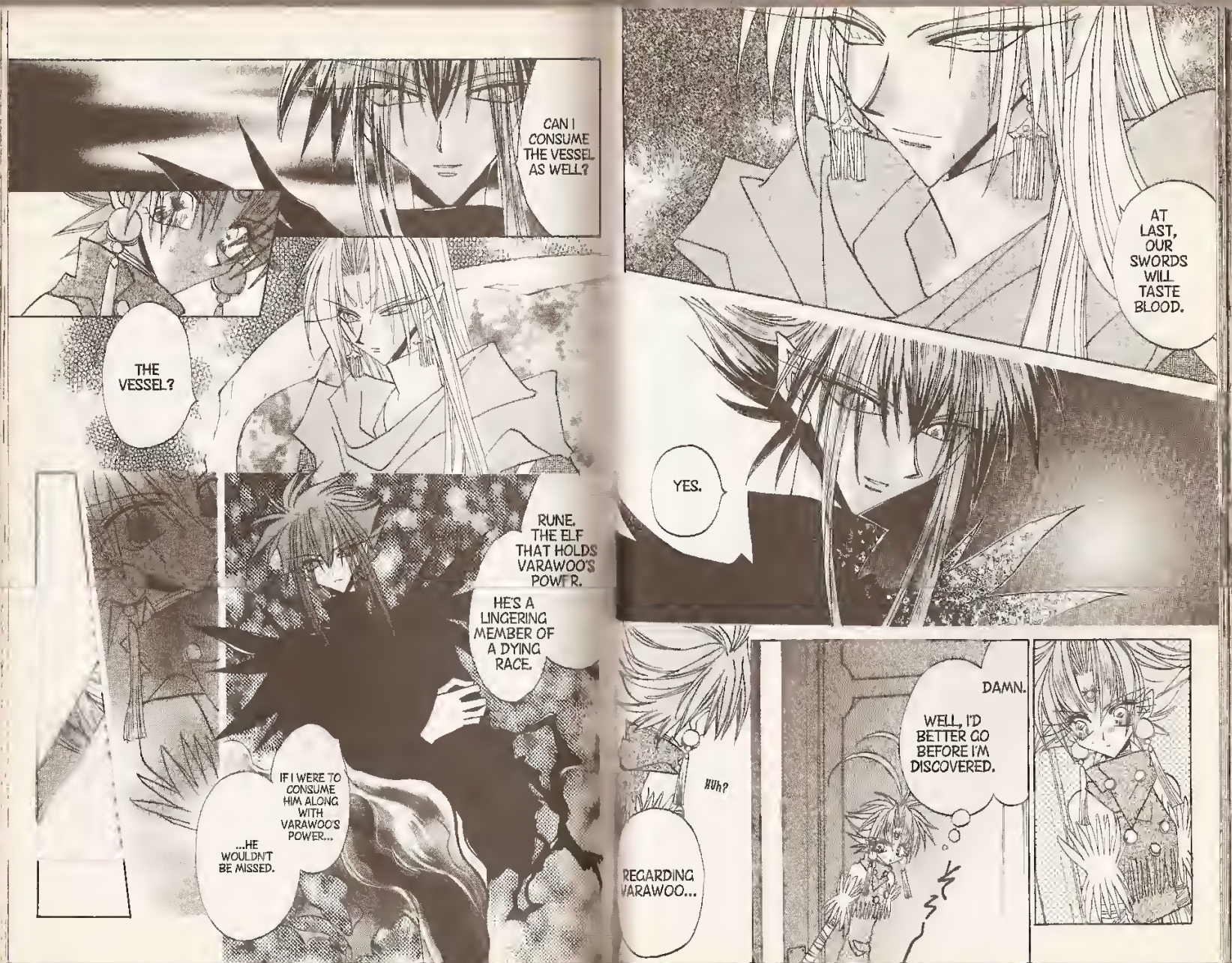

RATH...
Uh.

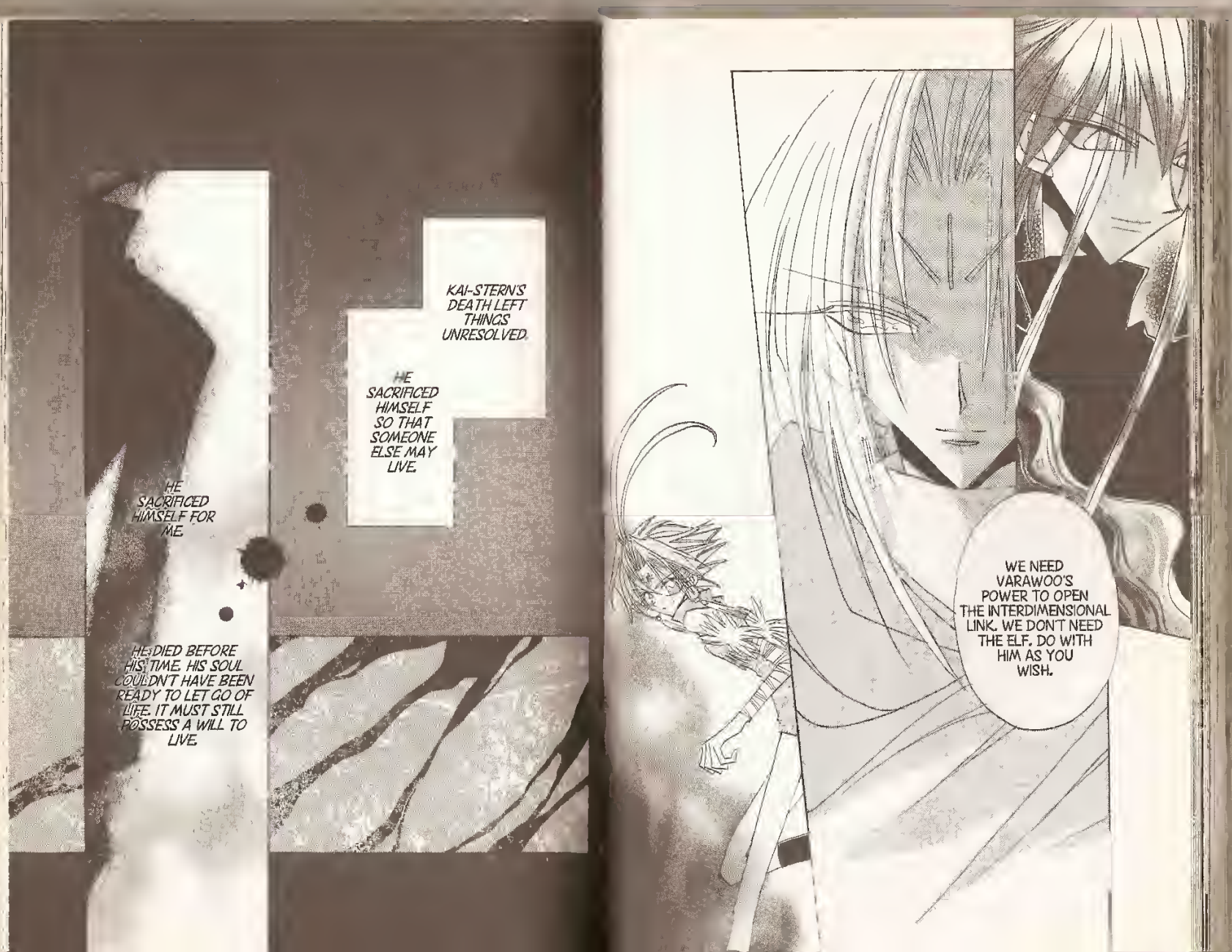


I KNEW IT! SHE'S A ZOMBIE!
I'M DEAD. NOTHING MORE.
AFTER ALL...
...I AM DEAD.
I CAN CROSS THE OCEAN.
COME WITH ME.

...WHIRL-POOLS. ONE ON THE GROUND...
...AND ONE IN THE SKY.
!
UGH!
ズル
ズル
ズル
ズル
CAN'T GET THAT GUY OFF MY MIND.
IT'S SO IRRITATING.
IS IT BECAUSE I HAVE TINTLET'S MEMORIES?
RUNE.
RUNE.
RUNE.
RUNE.
RUNE.

IS IT THAT OBVIOUS?
YOU LOOK LIKE YOU'RE HAVING FUN, FEDELTA.
GOOD.
WE'VE WAITED A LONG TIME TO CRUSH THE DRAGON CLAN.
OF COURSE I'M HAVING FUN.
YES, WE HAVE. I WOULD SAY...
...THAT WE'VE WAITED TOO LONG.
DO THEY MEAN THE THING THAT THE HUGE ARM CAME OUT OF?
WHIRLPOOLS?
I CAN FEEL EXCITEMENT IN THE AIR.
IT'S ALMOST TIME, ISN'T IT?
YES, LORD NADIL HAS TOLD US...
...THAT THE TIME IS NEAR.
ERYTHING WILL BE ESOLVED SOON.


AT LAST, OUR SWORDS WILL TASTE BLOOD.
YES.
CAN I CONSUME THE VESSEL AS WELL?
THE VESSEL?
RUNE, THE ELF THAT HOLDS VARAWOO'S POWER.
HE'S A LINGERING MEMBER OF A DYING RACE.
IF I WERE TO CONSUME HIM ALONG WITH VARAWOO'S POWER...
...HE WOULDN'T BE MISSED.
HUh?
REGARDING VARAWOO...
DAMN.
WELL, I'D BETTER GO BEFORE I'M DISCOVERED.


KAI-STERN'S DEATH LEFT THINGS UNRESOLVED.
HE SACRIFICED HIMSELF SO THAT SOMEONE ELSE MAY LIVE.
HE SACRIFICED HIMSELF FOR ME.
HE DIED BEFORE HIS TIME. HIS SOUL COULDN'T HAVE BEEN READY TO LET GO OF LIFE. IT MUST STILL POSSESS A WILL TO LIVE.
WE NEED VARAWOO'S POWER TO OPEN THE INTERDIMENSIONAL LINK. WE DON'T NEED THE ELF. DO WITH HIM AS YOU WISH.

COULD THAT SACRIFICE HAVE DAMNED HIM FOR ETERNITY?

HE DIED FOR A DEMON. FOR ME.

AND NOT A DAY GOES BY THAT I'M NOT REMINDED OF IT.

YOU'RE STILL THINKING ABOUT HIM. STOP IT.
.....
.....
.....
YOU ALWAYS KNOW EXACTLY WHAT I'M THINKING.
DO YOU KNOW HOW ANNOYING THAT IS!
SO I WAS RIGHT.
YOU HAVE A SIMPLE MIND. IT'S NOT TOO DIFFI-CULT.
MY MIND'S NOT SIMPLE!
.....
THAT'S NOT SIMPLE-MINDED! THAT'S DRIVEN!
YOU'RE OBSESSED WITH DEATH AND DEMONS!
SO?
WHY HAVE YOU BEEN SO MEAN TO ME LATELY?
BRAGGING IS ONE THING, BUT YOU REALLY SHOULDN'T LIE.
WHAT ARE YOU IMPLYING?!
Uh...
YOU KNOW, RATH, CONTRARY TO HOW I MAY COME OFF AT TIMES, I'M ACTUALLY A PRETTY SMART GUY.
UGH!
You're the one who's been acting like!
HOW DARE YOU TALK TO ME THAT WAY!
KAI-STERN ISN'T THERE! HE'S NOT ONE OF THOSE DEAD SOULS! I'M POSITIVE!
LOOK, YOU MAY NOT THINK I'M SMART, BUT I'M SURE ABOUT ONE THING.

NOT SO FAST!!
BY THE WAY, WHAT WAS IT YOU HAVE TO DO, FIJI?
ARE YOU IN A RUSH?
WHAT DID YOU MEAN?! A MESSAGE FROM KAI-STERN?!

HOW WOULD I KNOW?
SO, WHERE IS HE?
OH, UH... YEAH.
ARE YOU GUYS READY?
WELL THEN, MR. I-KNOW-EVERYTHING ...
BECAUSE KAI-STERN LEFT ME A MESSAGE.
...HOW CAN YOU BE SO SURE HE'S NOT THERE?!

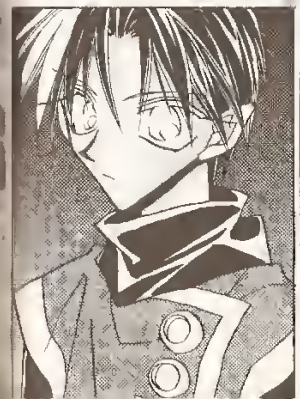
TRY THINKING OF IT THAT WAY.
WE SHOULD LET KAI-STERN REST IN PEACE.
THERE'S NO NEED TO GO WAKING THE DEAD.
RIGHT?
.....
It's just a shell.
WHAT IF SAABEL DID TURN KAI-STERN INTO ONE OF HIS MECHANICAL DOLLS?
ZOMA ...
IF KAI-STERN IS DOWN THERE, HE'S NOT GOING TO BE THE SAME PERSON WE KNOW AND LOVE. I'M NOT SURE HE'D WANT US TO SEE HIM LIKE THAT.
WOULD YOU STILL WANT TO SEE HIM?
COULD THAT MINDLESS DOLL EVEN BE CONSIDERED KAI-STERN?
THAT'S ENOUGH.
YOU'RE BEING UNFAIR.
I NEVER SAID I WANTED TO GO LOOKING FOR HIM.
NOW I UNDER-STAND HOW CESIA FEELS.
.....
Ugh!
WELL, THAT'S WHAT IT SOUNDED LIKE.

WELL, THEN... LET'S GO, FIJI.

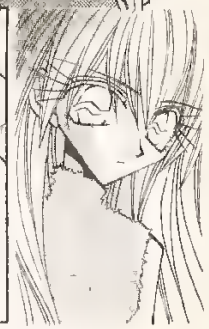
SURE.
THIS WAY.

NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS, MAKE SURE YOU STAY WITH ME.
UH...
...OKAY.

I'M SURE OF IT.
IS IT TRUE?
IS HE AT PEACE?

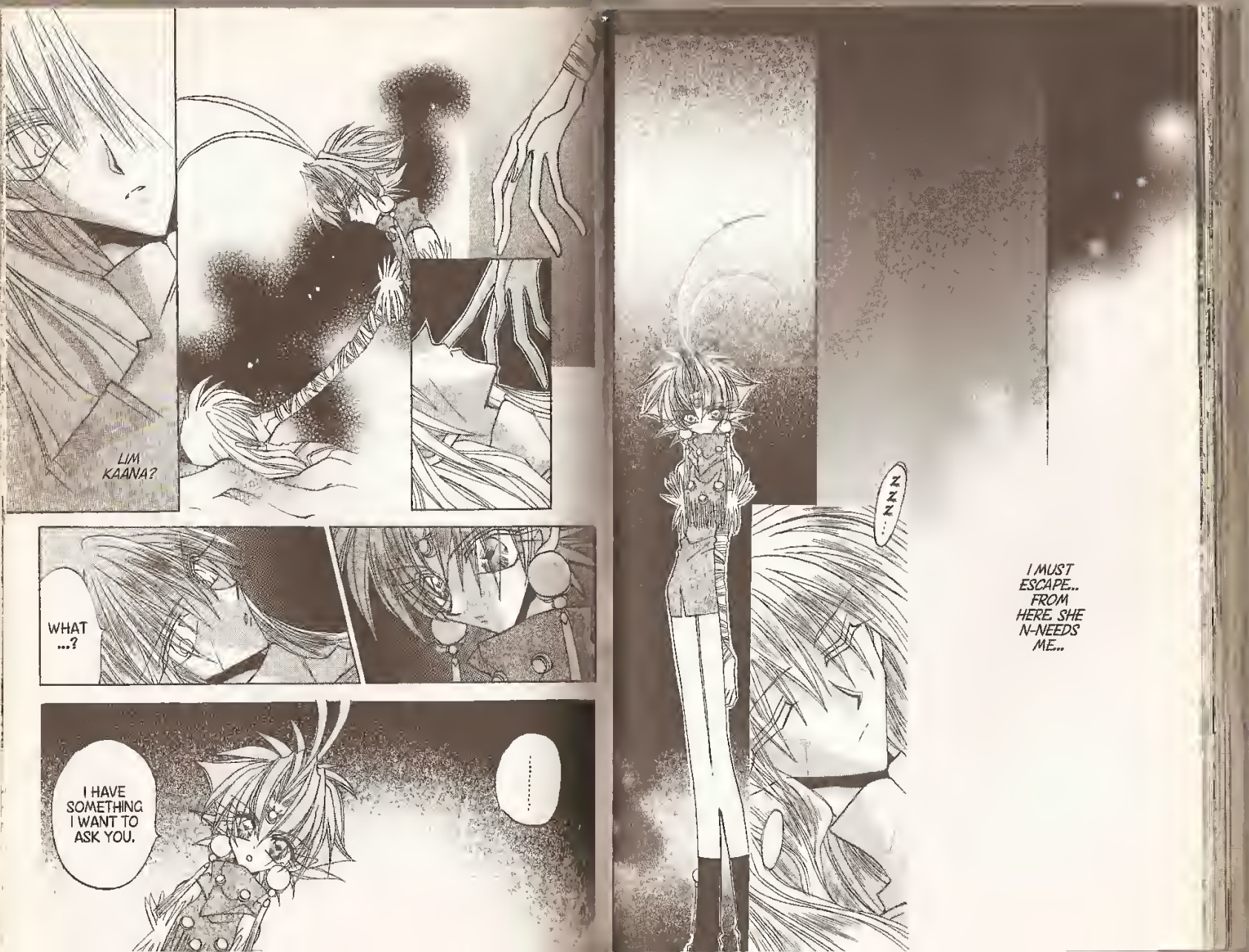


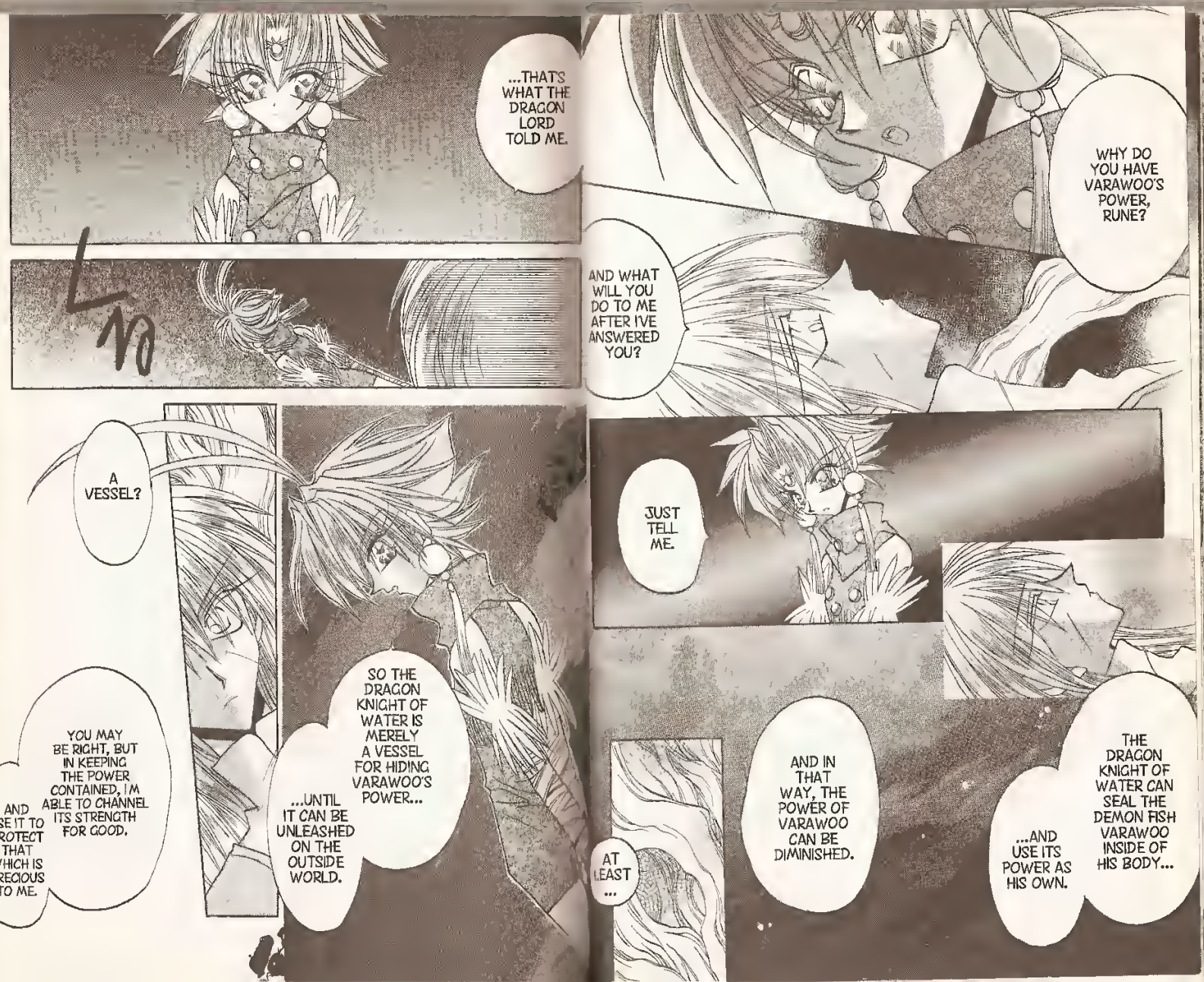
SOME-TIMES YOU CAN BE TOO NEGATIVE ...
...RATH.



WAIT!
DOES THAT MEAN WE'RE GOING TO NADIL'S CASTLE?! RIGHT NOW?!!
THAT'S RIGHT.
NO! WAIT! I'M NOT READY!
.....
!!

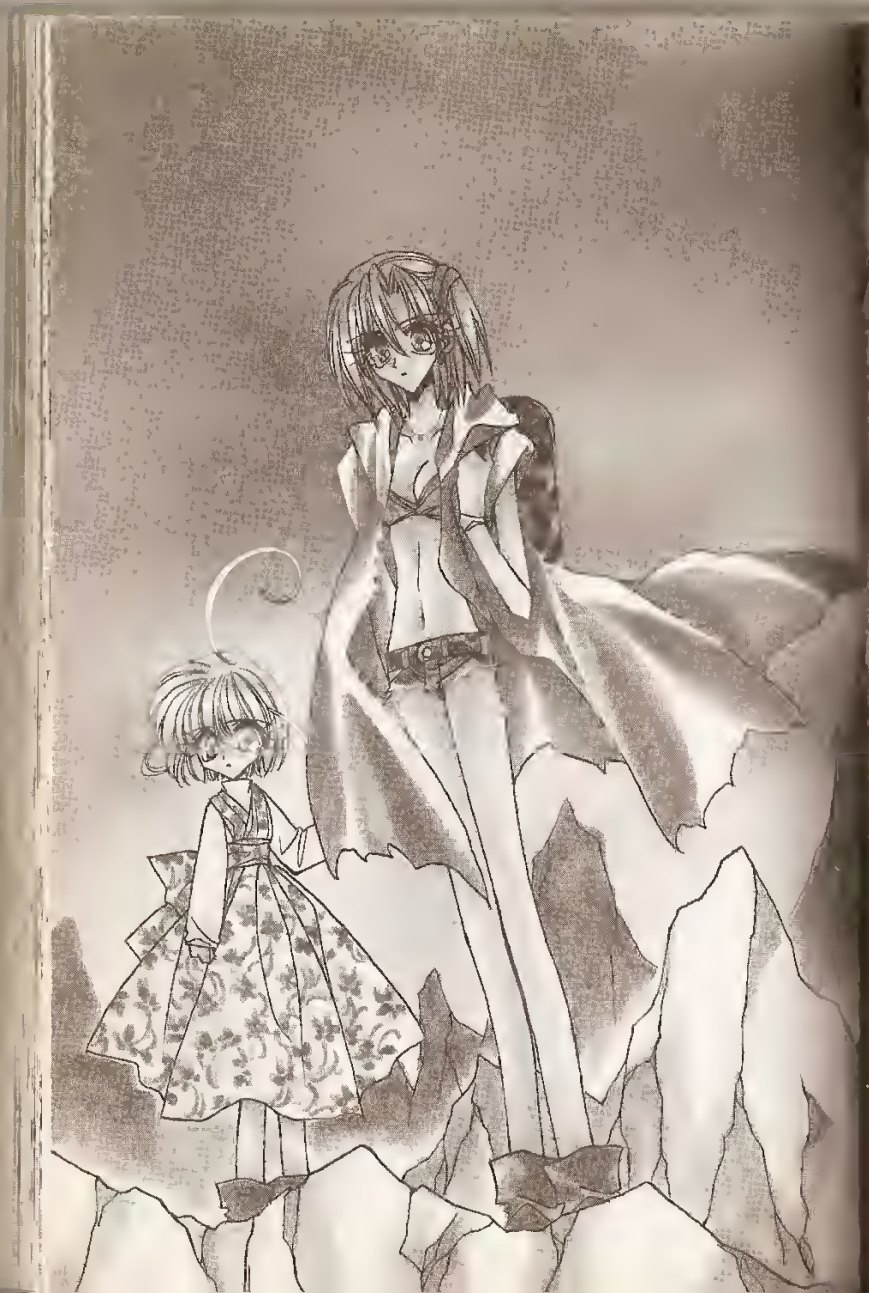
THIS CAN'T BE GOOD.
MY POWER OF VIRTUE IS DRAINED...
I WONDER... IF TINTLET IS ALL RIGHT.
I FEEL SLEEPY...
I HAVE TO DO SOME-THING.
IF I DON'T, I'M GONNA END UP AS PLANT FERTILIZER.
URRRG!
I WONDER IF IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE GUARDING ME.
IT'S CALM AND OBEDIENT INSIDE THE CASTLE.
THIS TREE DEMON HAS ME PUZZLED.

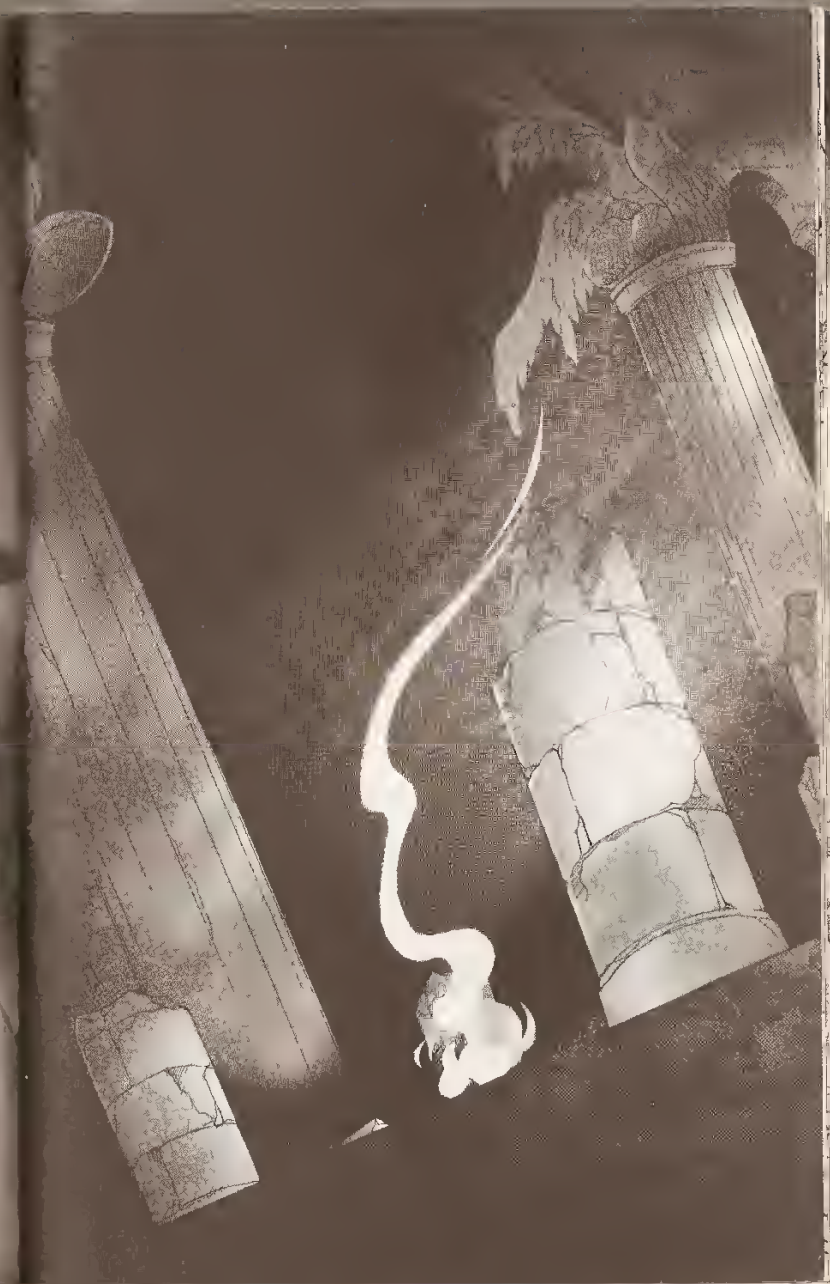

LIM KAANA?
WHAT ...?
I HAVE SOMETHING I WANT TO ASK YOU.
.....
ZZZ...
I MUST ESCAPE... FROM HERE. SHE N-NEEDS ME...

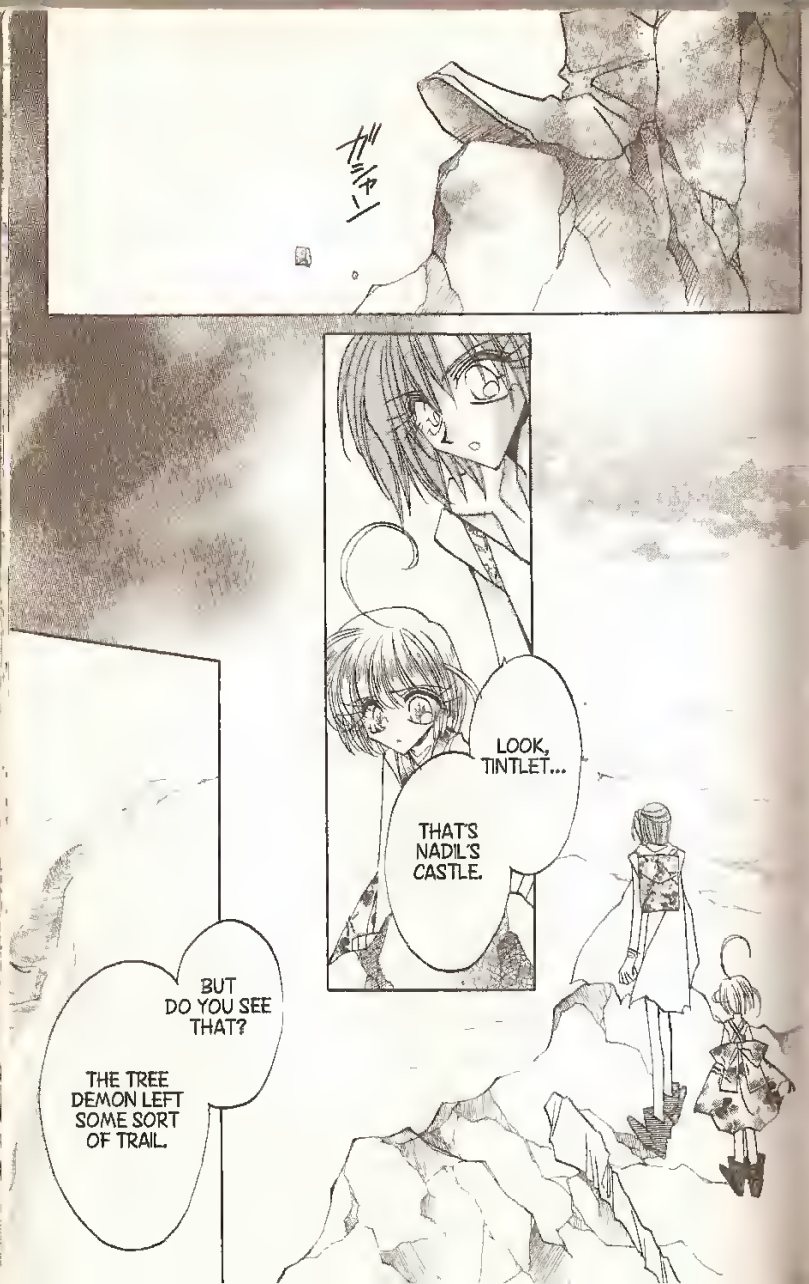

...THAT'S WHAT THE DRAGON LORD TOLD ME.
WHY DO YOU HAVE VARAWOO'S POWER, RUNE?
AND WHAT WILL YOU DO TO ME AFTER I'VE ANSWERED YOU?
JUST TELL ME.
A VESSEL?
SO THE DRAGON KNIGHT OF WATER IS MERELY A VESSEL FOR HIDING VARAWOO'S POWER...
...UNTIL IT CAN BE UNLEASHED ON THE OUTSIDE WORLD.
YOU MAY BE RIGHT, BUT IN KEEPING THE POWER CONTAINED, I'M ABLE TO CHANNEL ITS STRENGTH FOR GOOD.
AND USE IT TO PROTECT THAT WHICH IS PRECIOUS TO ME.
AT LEAST ...
AND IN THAT WAY, THE POWER OF VARAWOO CAN BE DIMINISHED.
...AND USE ITS POWER AS HIS OWN.
THE DRAGON KNIGHT OF WATER CAN SEAL THE DEMON FISH VARAWOO INSIDE OF HIS BODY...

SHE IS A PART OF ME.
SHE HAS BEEN EVER SINCE WE WERE BORN.
SHE IS MY WIFE AND SOUL MATE.
NO.
DO YOU MEAN TINTLET?
YES.
TINTLET IS VERY PRECIOUS.
THAT WHICH IS PRECIOUS...
...YOUR GIRLFRIEND, RUNE?
THEN IS TINTLET...
SHE IS MORE THAN THAT.

WHAT?
WHAT IS IT?!
NO!
.....
HUH?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
!?
HUH? BUT I...I...
WHAT DO YOU THINK I MEAN?!

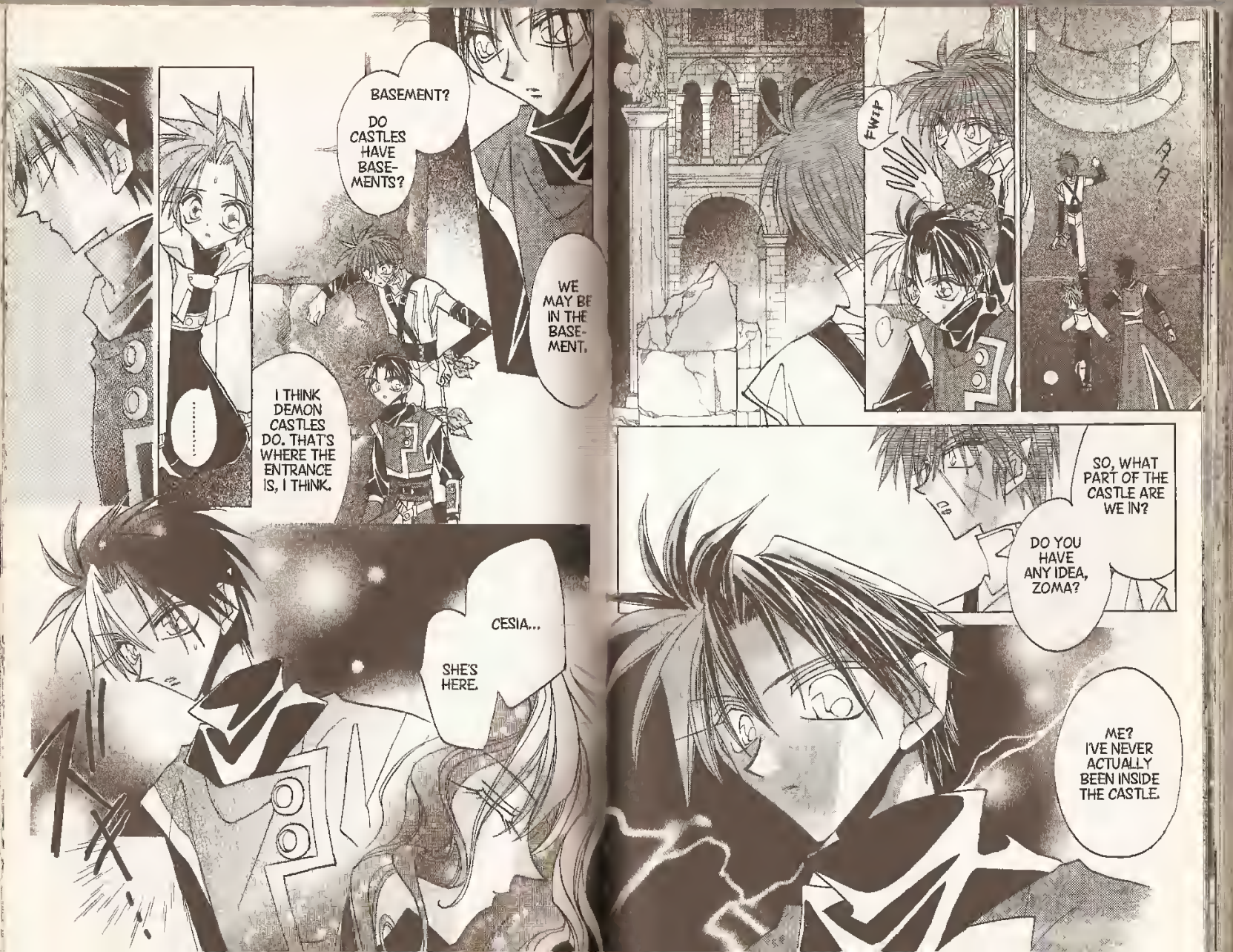


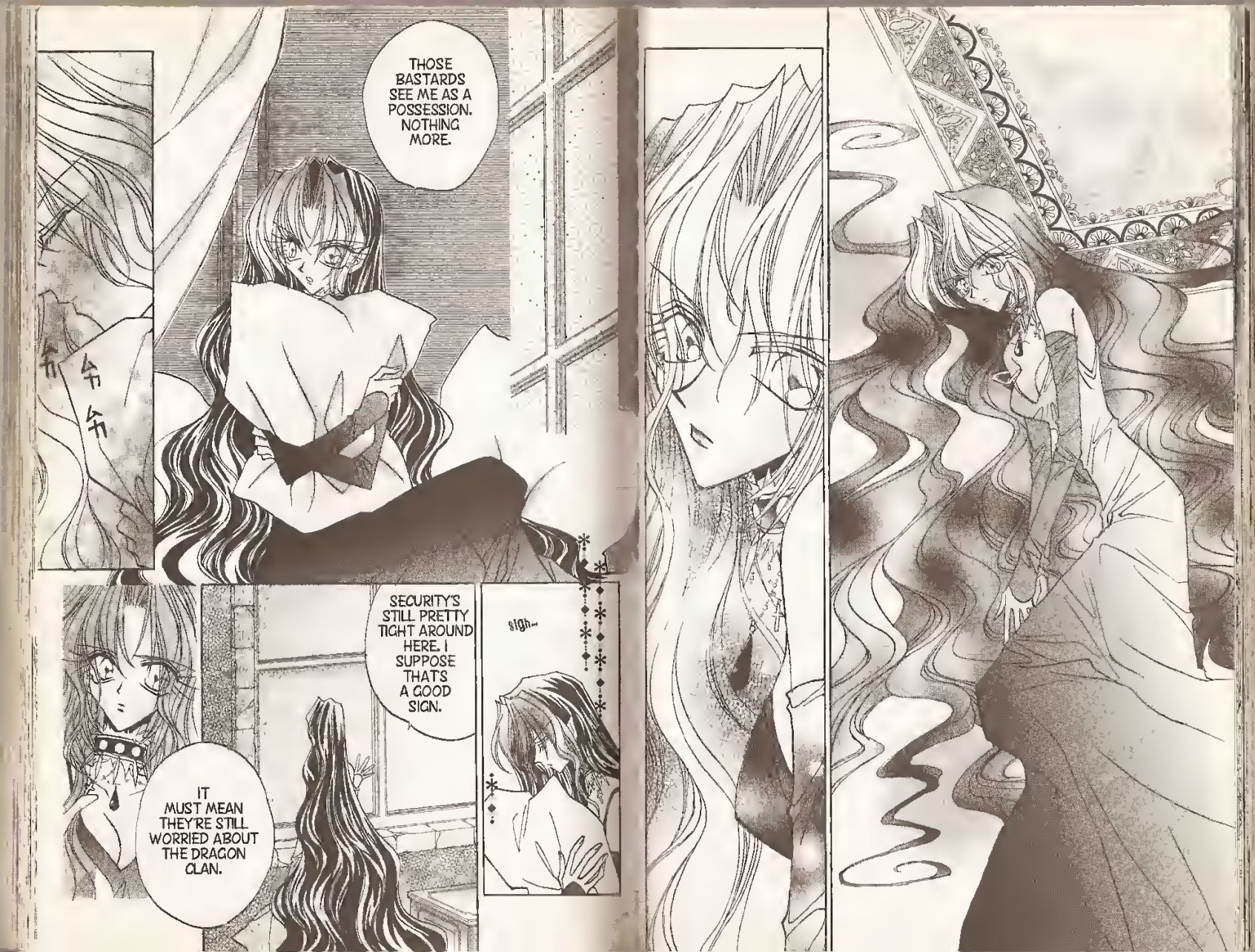



LOOK, TINTLET...
THAT'S NADIL'S CASTLE.
BUT DO YOU SEE THAT?
THE TREE DEMON LEFT SOME SORT OF TRAIL.

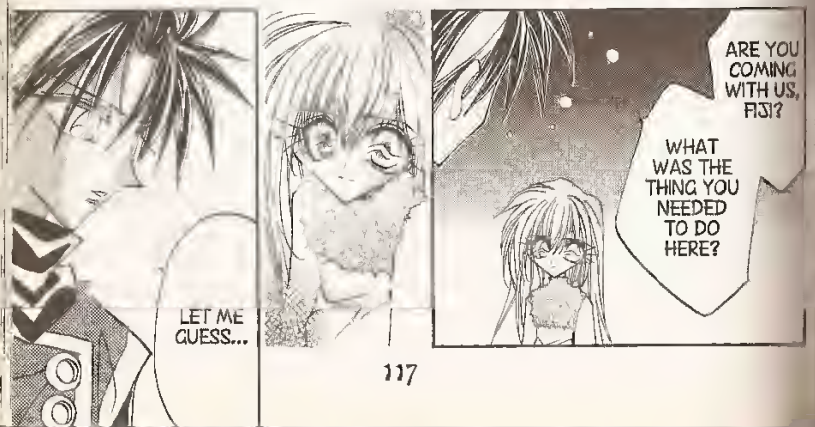
RUNE MUST BE IN THE CASTLE!
C'MON, TINTLET!
LET'S GO!

WE'RE FINALLY HERE.
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?! GET DOWN! WE'RE IN ENEMY TERRITORY.
THIS IS IT?
NADIL'S CASTLE?


BASEMENT?
DO CASTLES HAVE BASE-MENTS?
WE MAY BE IN THE BASE-MENT.
I THINK DEMON CASTLES DO. THAT'S WHERE THE ENTRANCE IS, I THINK.
.....
CESIA...
SHE'S HERE.
FWIP
SO, WHAT PART OF THE CASTLE ARE WE IN?
DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA, ZOMA?
ME? I'VE NEVER ACTUALLY BEEN INSIDE THE CASTLE.


THOSE BASTARDS SEE ME AS A POSSESSION. NOTHING MORE.
SECURITY'S STILL PRETTY TIGHT AROUND HERE. I SUPPOSE THAT'S A GOOD SIGN.
sigh...
IT MUST MEAN THEY'RE STILL WORRIED ABOUT THE DRAGON CLAN.

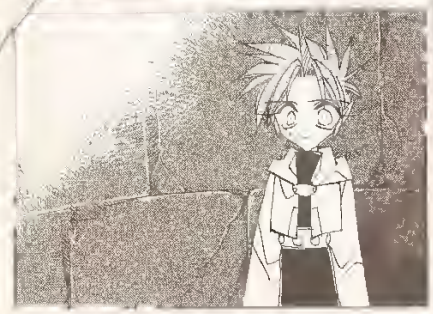
CESIA CAN WAIT, THOUGH.
CESIA'S HERE.
YOU'RE RIGHT.
WE NEED TO FIND RUNE FIRST.
THAT'S GOOD.
I CAN FEEL HER PRESENCE.
OH.

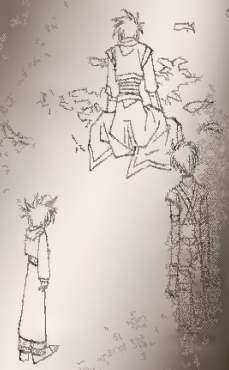

LET ME GUESS...
ARE YOU COMING WITH US, FIJI?
WHAT WAS THE THING YOU NEEDED TO DO HERE?

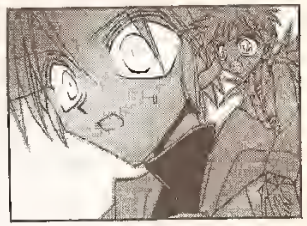
IT'S IMPORTANT.
IT MUST BE DONE.
FIJI!!
RATH...
...I'M SORRY.
IT HAS TO DO...
...WITH GIL, RIGHT?
IT'S NOT ABOUT GIL.
ALTHOUGH, I REALLY WANT TO SEE HIM AGAIN.
IT'S SOME-THING I HAVE TO DO.
HUH?
FIJI?
BESIDES...
IT'S NOT SOMETHING I WANT TO DO.
!?

RATH?

.....
THAT SON OF A BITCH!



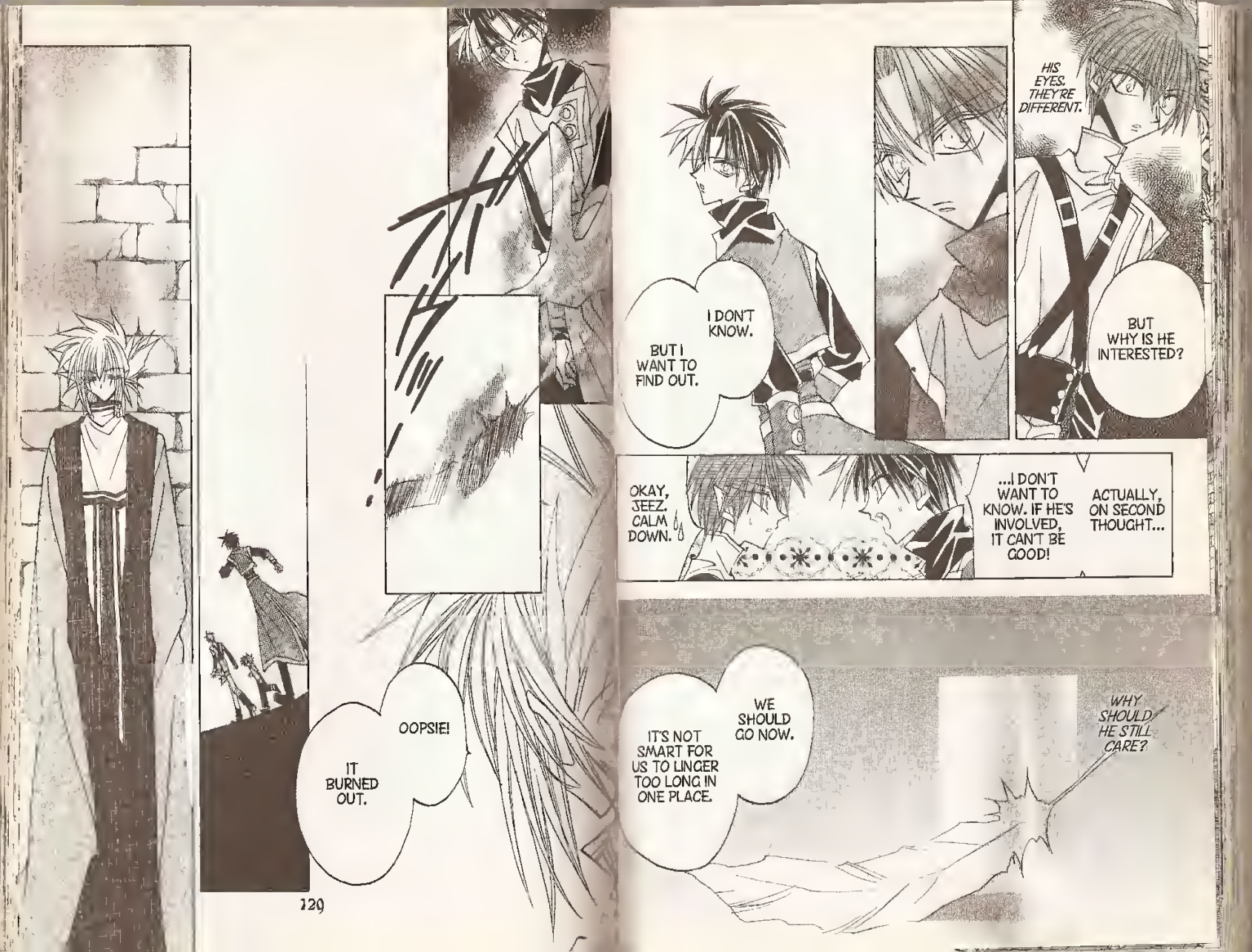




HE TRICKED ME!
HE USED FIJI'S BODY!
HE GAVE IT A DEMON SOUL JUST TO LURE ME HERE!

YES, I GUESS YOU COULD SAY I'M A BIT JEALOUS.
What's his problem?
Ha ha ha!
THIS IS ABOUT CESIA, ISN'T IT?
I'M JUST SPEEDING THINGS ALONG. THAT'S ALL.
RATH WOULD'VE GOTTEN THERE EVEN WITHOUT MY HELP.
HOW ARE YOU HELPING HIM? WHAT IF NADIL'S ARMY CAPTURES AND KILLS HIM?
RATH WILL NOT DIE TODAY.
I WON'T LET HIM.
...PERHAPS I SHOULD HEAD OVER THERE TO KEEP AN EYE ON HIM.
ALL THE SAME..
THAT'S NICE. HERE, I BROUGHT YOU SOME TEA.
THANK YOU.
I'M DONE WITH HER, GARFAKCY.
VERY GOOD, RATH.
THOUGH THIS TIME IT'S FOR NADIL. THAT'S A FIRST.
CAUSING TROUBLE AGAIN, I SEE.
...YOU HELP THEM OUT, RIGHT?
GARFAKCY, WHEN SOMEONE YOU CARE ABOUT IS IN TROUBLE...

DO YOU THINK THIS IS SAABEL'S DOING?
HOW STRANGE.
WHO COULD'VE DONE THIS?
SOMEONE WHO CAN MANIPULATE SOULS.
.....
BACK AT THE DRAGON CASTLE...
...KAI-STERN DETECTED A POWERFUL PRESENCE. I THINK THIS MIGHT BE THE SAME PERSON. HE SEEMS TO BE INTERESTED IN ME.
WE LIVE ON A DEAD CONTINENT!!! WHAT DO YOU THINK?!!
VERY ANNOYED
WHAT'S WRONG? ARE YOU BORED HERE?
GARFAKCY, ARE YOU JEALOUS OF CESIA TOO?
SO WHAT IF I AM?!
JUST FORGET IT.
IS THAT WHY YOU'RE UPSET?


OOPSIE!
IT BURNED OUT.
I DON'T KNOW.
BUT I WANT TO FIND OUT.
HIS EYES. THEY'RE DIFFERENT.
BUT WHY IS HE INTERESTED?
OKAY, JEEZ. CALM DOWN.
...I DON'T WANT TO KNOW. IF HE'S INVOLVED, IT CAN'T BE GOOD!
ACTUALLY, ON SECOND THOUGHT...
IT'S NOT SMART FOR US TO LINGER TOO LONG IN ONE PLACE.
WE SHOULD GO NOW.
WHY SHOULD HE STILL CARE?

I WONDER...
HOW IS IT THE DRAGON CLAN MAINTAINS THEIR HOLD ON RATH?
I DOUBT THEY'D BE DOING SO WELL IF THEY KNEW THAT I'M AWIS LARA.
HOW ABOUT I SNEAK INTO THE DRAGON CASTLE...
...AND JUST KILL LYKOULEON AND HIS CRONIES? DO YOU THINK THAT WOULD WORK? WOULD RATH FINALLY RETURN TO ME?
WHAD-DYA THINK?
I DON'T KNOW. BUT IF THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE PLANNING, I WANT TO BE A PART OF IT.
HOW HAVE THEY EVEN MANAGED TO KEEP RATH ALIVE?
.....
SOME MORE TEA, BOSS?
YES, PLEASE. OOH! AND ONE OF THOSE LEMON TART THINGIES!

HE'S GOING TO KILL YOU!
BUT...
...WHY DO YOU CARE?
FEDELTA WANTS TO TAKE VARAWOO'S POWER FOR HIMSELF.
WE MUST HURRY!
LIM KAANA!!
THAT'S A PORTAL! SOMETHING'S COMING!
!

I DON'T KNOW!
I'M A DEMON! I'M SUPPOSED TO HATE YOU. I DO HATE YOU! BUT FOR SOME REASON, I ALSO WANT TO HELP.
YOU TELL ME WHY, RUNE!
ugh...
...WE NEED TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THAT PORTAL.
AND THIS BLASTED PLANT DEMON IS COMPLETELY AWAKE NOW.
I'M FINE. LIM KAANA...
ARE YOU HURT?
AAH!

RUNE!!

WATER DRAGON!!!
HFF
HFF
HFF
IT HURTS...
...BUT I CAN'T LET THAT STOP ME.

BUT I CAN'T HELP IT!
HEE
WHAT AM I DOING?
IF I HELP RUNE, IT'S TREASON.
TRAITORS ARE TORTURED AND KILLED.
LIM!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

I DON'T KNOW WHY I'M HELPING YOU. ALL I KNOW IS THAT I'M UPSET AND CONFUSED AND SOMEHOW IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT!
IT'S YOUR FAULT, RUNE!
WHY AM I TELLING HIM THIS?
WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN TO ME?
IF NOT FOR YOU, I NEVER WOULD HAVE HURT TINTLET!
I WOULD HAVE LEFT HER ALONE. THIS IS YOUR FAULT, RUNE.
...EVEN IF I'M THE ONE TO BLAME.

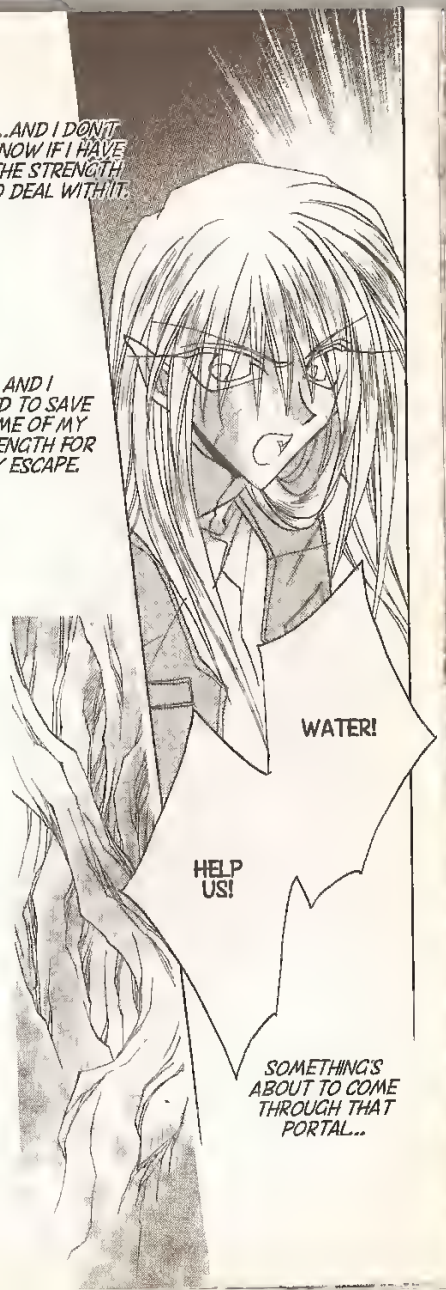
WATER!
COME HERE!
HFF
HFF
THANK YOU.

LIM KAANA ...
COULD YOU HELP ME PULL THIS OUT?
I'M WEAK FROM HAVING MY POWER DRAINED...
...AND THIS BRANCH ISN'T EXACTLY HELPING.
DOES IT HURT?
IT DOESN'T MATTER. PULL IT OUT QUICKLY.

THAT SHOULD HELP.
IT WILL EASE THE PAIN.
RUNE...
!
LIM...
WHAT ARE YOU...?

...AND I DON'T KNOW IF I HAVE THE STRENGTH TO DEAL WITH IT.

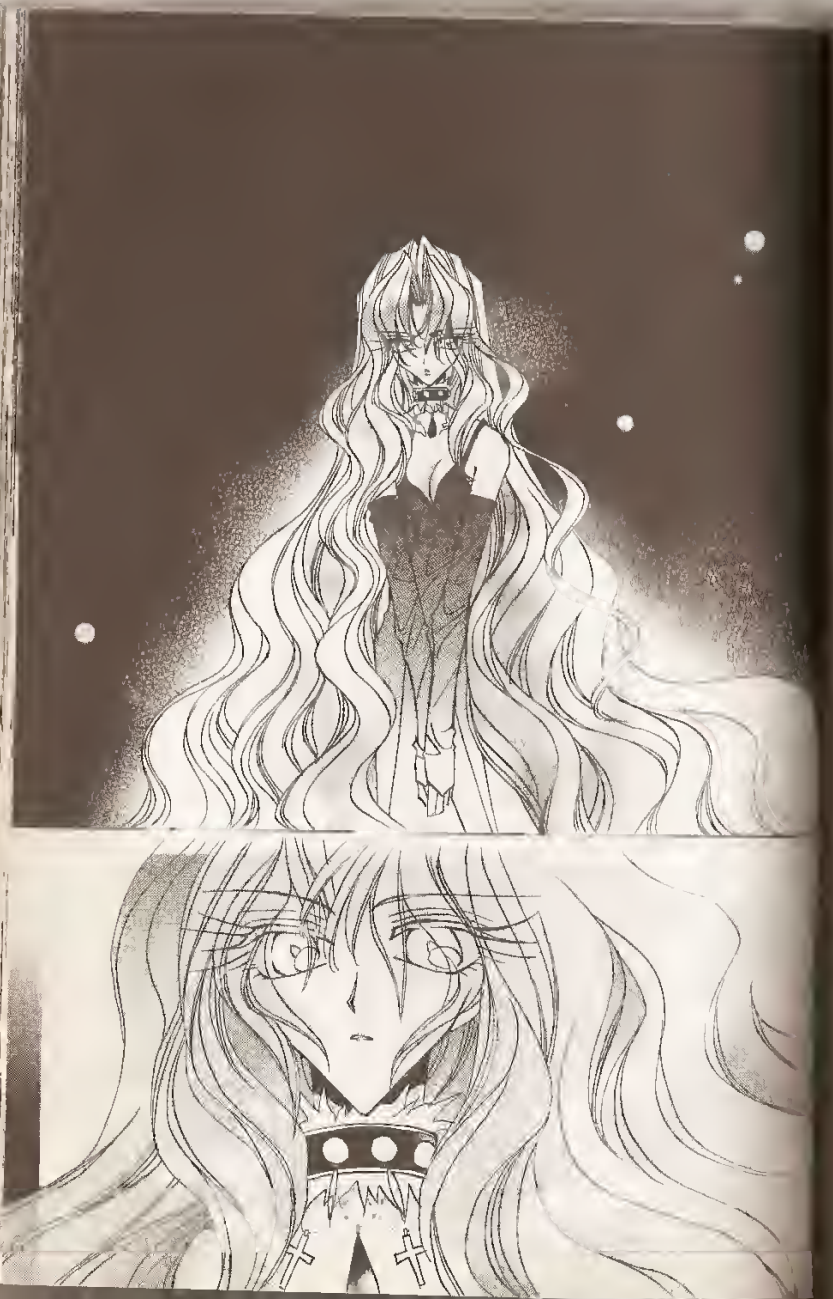
AND I NEED TO SAVE SOME OF MY STRENGTH FOR MY ESCAPE.

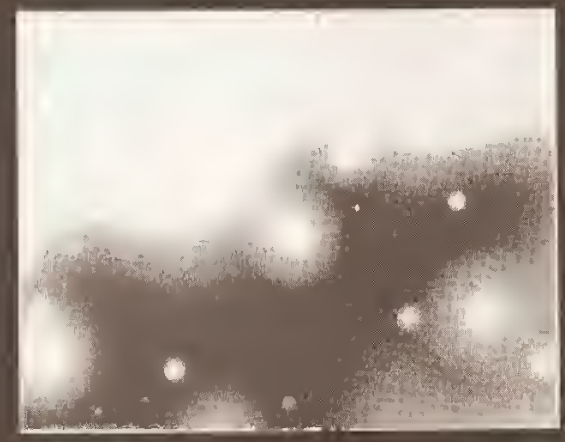


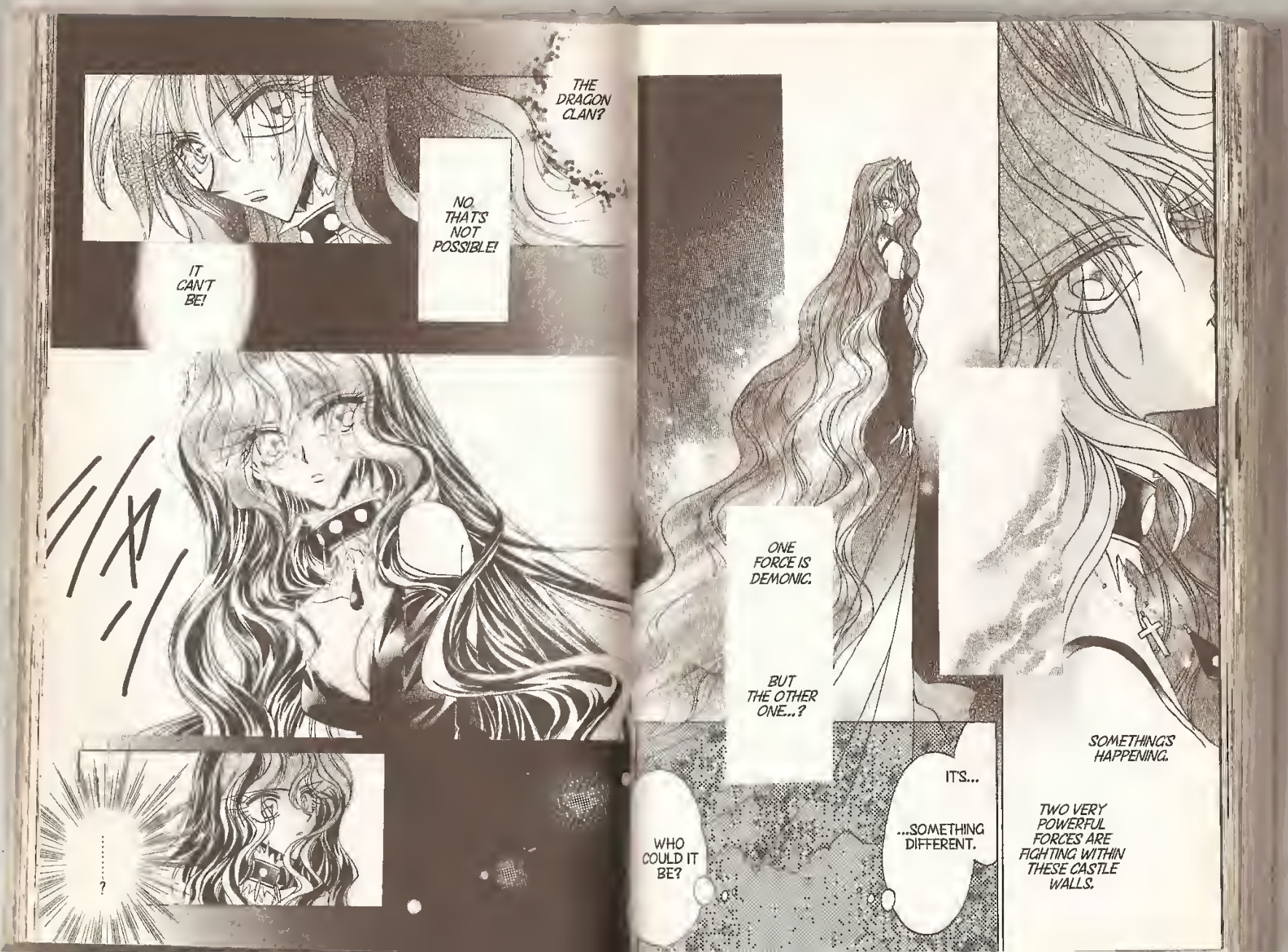
WATER!

HELP US!

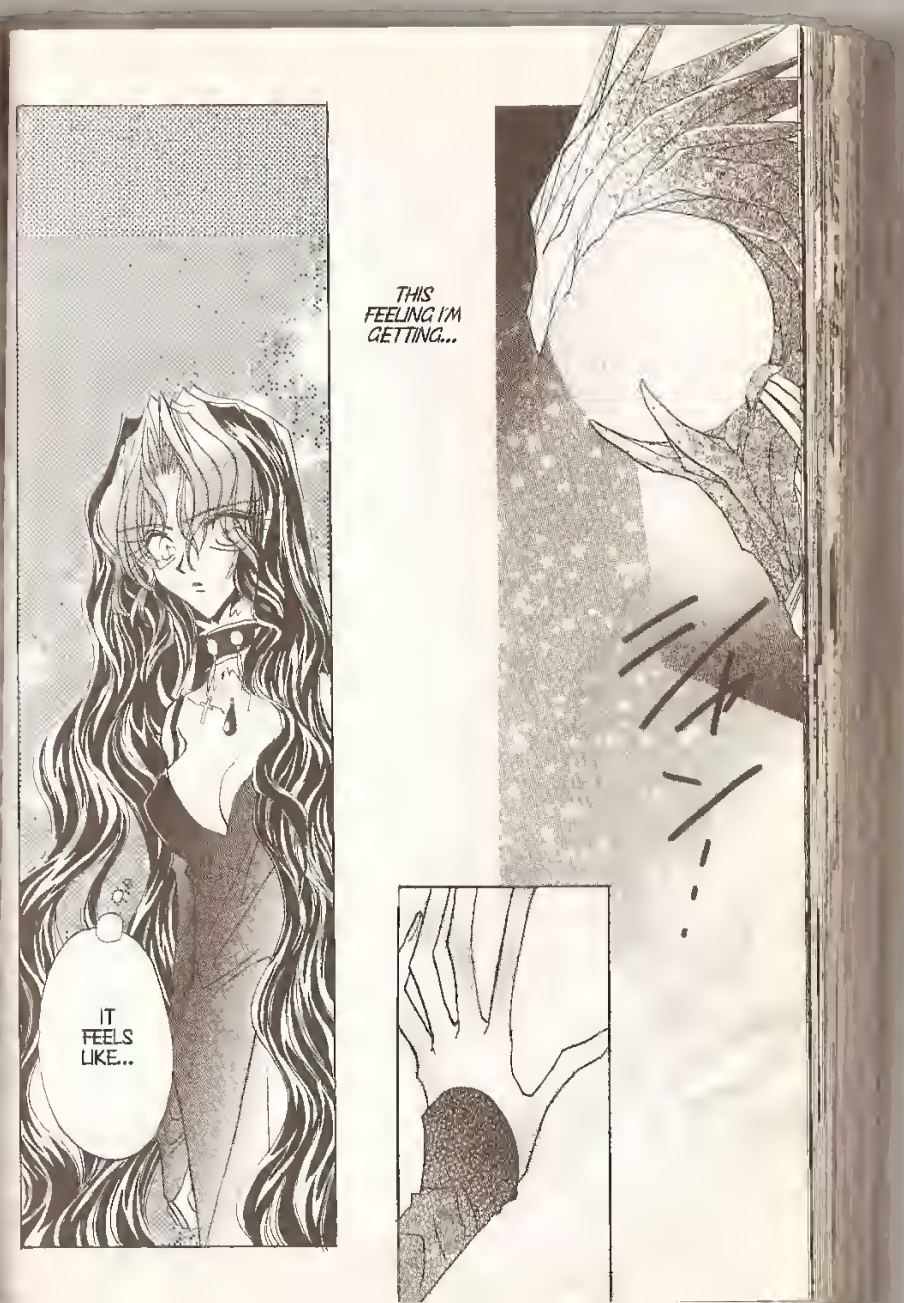
SOMETHING'S ABOUT TO COME THROUGH THAT PORTAL...



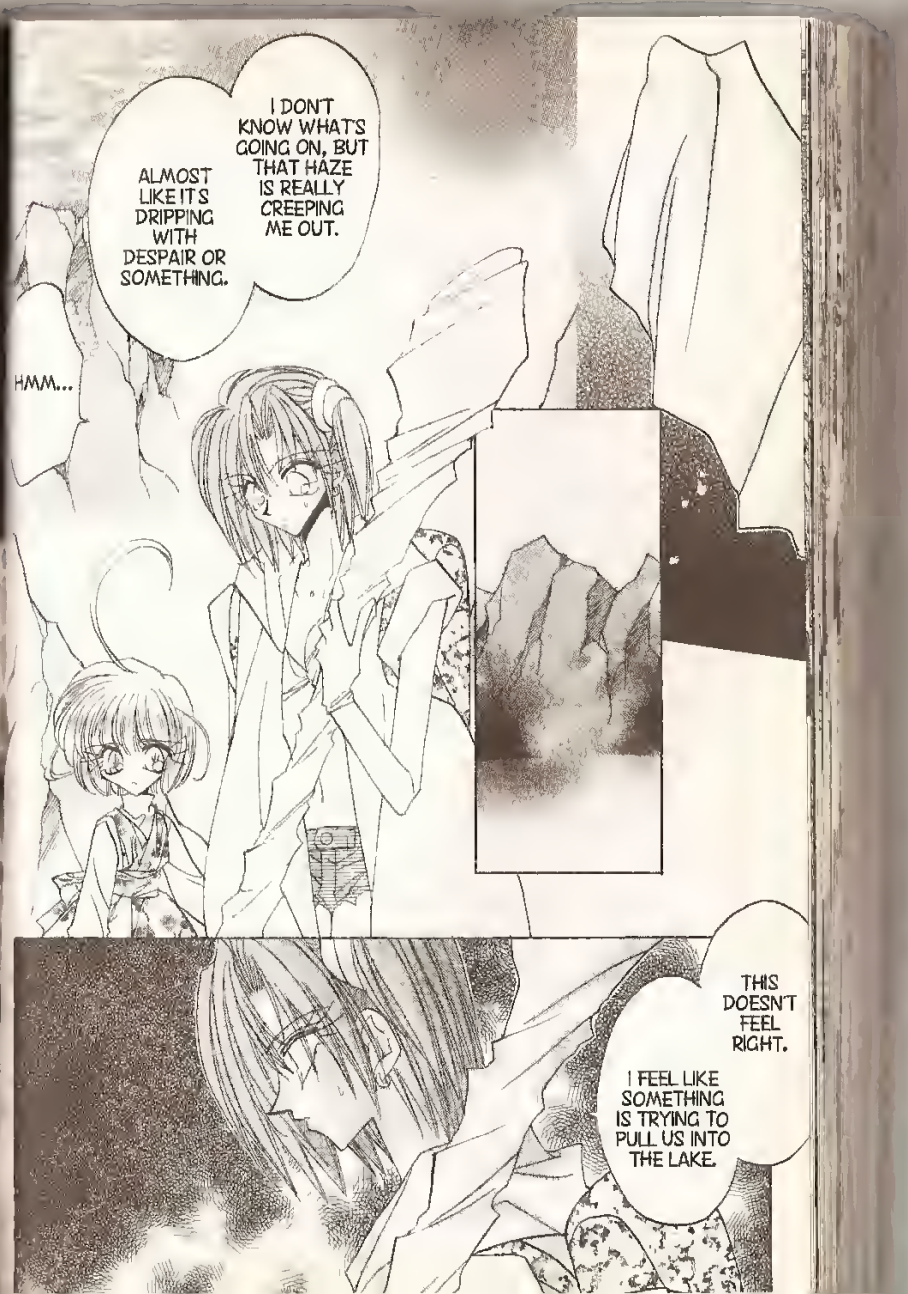



THE DRAGON CLAN?
NO. THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE!
IT CAN'T BE!
.....?
ONE FORCE IS DEMONIC.
BUT THE OTHER ONE...?
WHO COULD IT BE?
IT'S...
...SOMETHING DIFFERENT.
SOMETHING'S HAPPENING.
TWO VERY POWERFUL FORCES ARE FIGHTING WITHIN THESE CASTLE WALLS.

...THE WIND STAFF!


IT FEELS LIKE...
THIS FEELING I'M GETTING...

IT'S HAPPENING.
EVERYTHING WITHIN ME IS TURNING BLACK.
WATER DRAGON!
SUPPRESS THAT BLACK SPIRIT! IT'S STARTING TO AFFECT ME!
AND THE WORST PART ABOUT IT IS...
I LIKE IT.


I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON, BUT THAT HAZE IS REALLY CREEPING ME OUT.
ALMOST LIKE IT'S DRIPPING WITH DESPAIR OR SOMETHING.
HMM...
THIS DOESN'T FEEL RIGHT.
I FEEL LIKE SOMETHING IS TRYING TO PULL US INTO THE LAKE.

IS IT VARAWOO?
HIS EYES...
THEY'RE COLD.

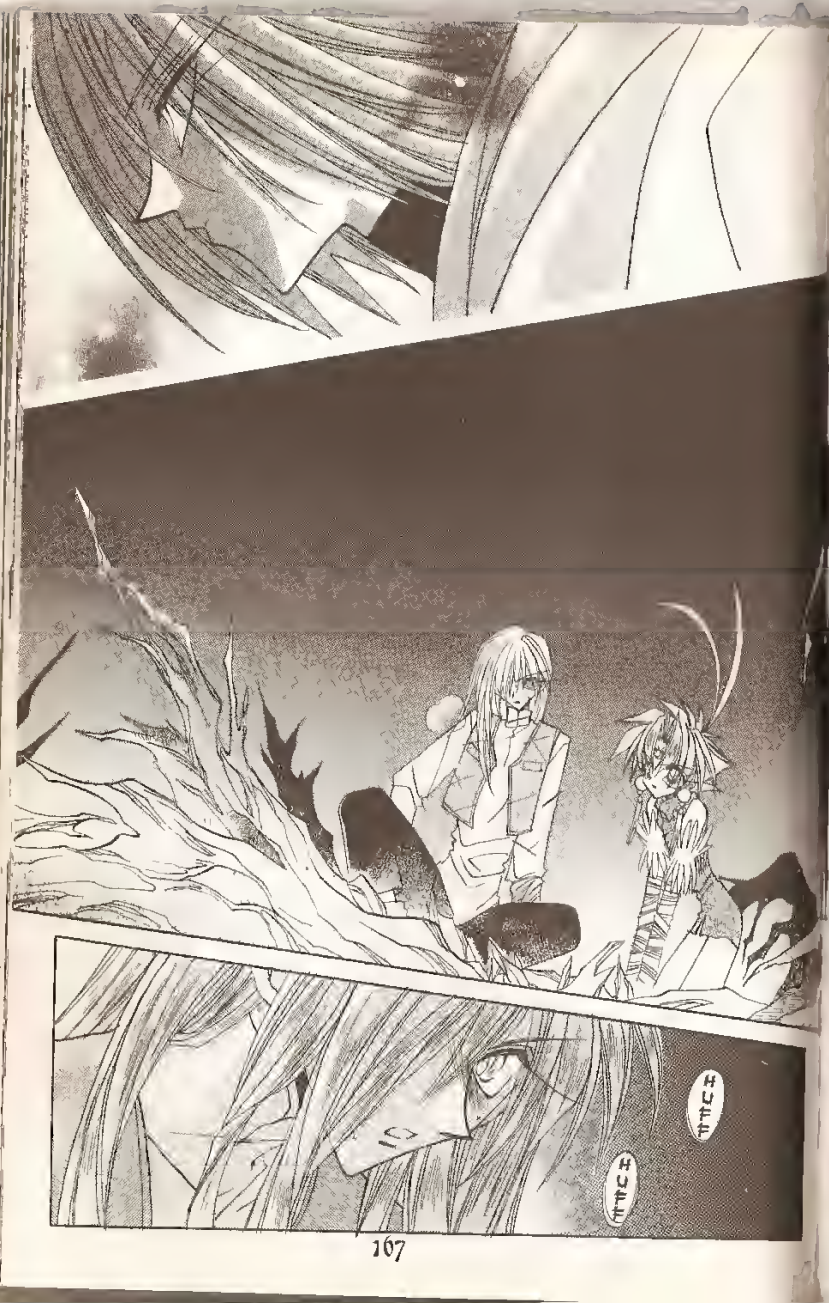
RUNE!
I'VE BOUND THE TREE IN MY THREAD! IT CAN'T MOVE!
...

RUNE...
IS HE GOING TO USE THE DEMON'S POWER?
AAAH!
UGH...

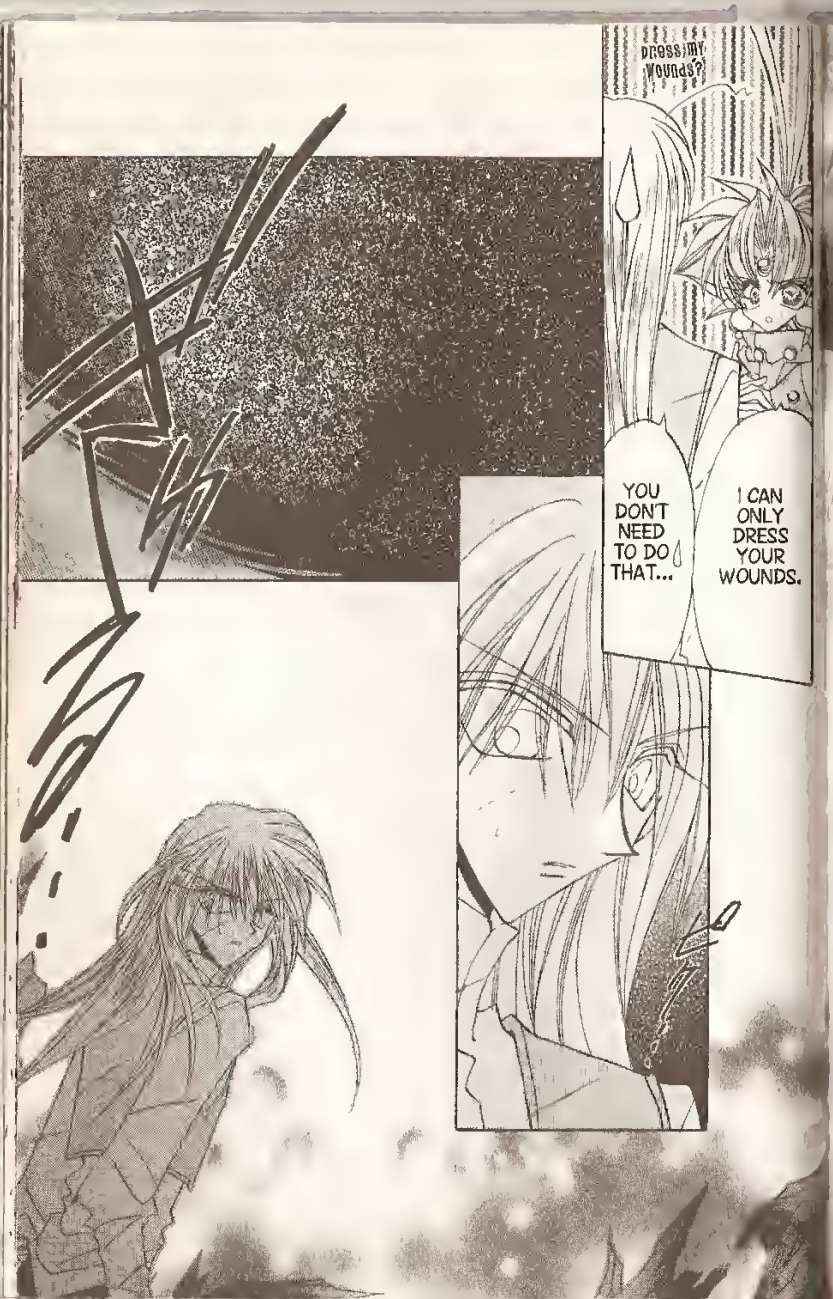
A DEMON'S POWER CAN BE USED FOR GOOD!
WHEN I RECEIVED IT, I BECAME ENVELOPED IN WHITE LIGHT.
THE POWER WAS GIVEN TO ME BY THE DRAGON LORD.
WILL I SEE THE MIGHT OF VARAWOO WITH MY OWN EYES?
I'VE RUN OUT OF OPTIONS.
I HAVE NO CHOICE.

CAN'T YOU BE MORE CONSIDERAT IN YOUR KILLING?
YOU HAVE NO SENSE OF CRAFT. NO ARTISTRY WHAT-SOEVER.
I CAME HERE TO COLLECT DEAD BODIES.
NOT TO COLLECT PIECES OF DISMEMBERED FLESH.
THIS WON'T DO.
YOU'RE JUST A KILLING MACHINE.
DAMN.
IGH...
IT'S COMPLETELY MANGLED.
I CAN'T CREATE A DOLL OUT OF THIS.

LET'S GO, GARABA.
NEXT TIME...
...TRY LEAVING ME WITH SOMETHING THAT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE A JIGSAW PUZZLE.


HUFF
HUFF

IT'S BECAUSE ...
...I HAVE HER MEMORIES INSIDE OF ME.
I REMEMBER WHEN SHE SACRIFICED HERSELF FOR YOU. I REMEMBER EVERYTHING ABOUT HER LIFE!
I CAN REMEMBER YOU SAVING HER.
...YOU REALLY DO LOOK LIKE TINTLET.
WHEN YOU LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT...
IT'S UNBELIEV-ABLE.
.....
BUT...
DON'T WORRY.
COME ON...NONE OF THAT.
.....
RUNE...
...I...
AND ELVES RECOVER MUCH MORE QUICKLY THAN MEN.
I MAY BE DOWN FOR THE MOMENT, BUT I'M NOT OUT.


Dress my wounds?
YOU DON'T NEED TO DO THAT...
I CAN ONLY DRESS YOUR WOUNDS.

...THOUGH I POSSESS TINTLET'S MEMORIES...
...I DON'T HAVE HER POWERS! I'M NOT HER!
SHE WAS ABLE TO HEAL YOU...
...BUT I CAN'T.

SUCH A PITY. YOU DID AMUSE ME SO.
I KNEW YOU WERE INCOMPETENT, LIM KAANA...
...BUT I NEVER THOUGHT YOU WERE A TRAITOR.

LIM KAANA...
BUT...
...THAT POWER WAS ORIGINALLY OURS.
YOU WERE TO BRING BACK THE VESSEL...NOT HELP IT ESCAPE.
...YOU HAD AN ORDER.
I'VE BEEN ASKED TO DELIVER YOU A GIFT.
A LITTLE SOMETHING TO SERVE AS A REMINDER OF WHAT CAN HAPPEN WHEN YOU DOUBLE-CROSS LORD NADIL.
WOOSH
YOU'RE USING VARAWOO'S POWER.
A WISE STRATEGY, DRAGON KNIGHT OF WATER.

FWIP
WHUMP
LIM!!

!!
LIM KAANA!!
CRK
TI TING
I'M NOT DONE WITH YOU YET.
NOT SO FAST.

Dragon Knights

In Volume 18:

Captured and imprisoned, things aren't looking good for our Dragon Knight of Water, and while Rune faces the terror of uncertainty, Rath and Thatz have far worse horrors to contend with outside the castle. The mysterious white haze surrounding Nadil's palace is no ordinary fog. It's a sinister trap of human souls making the castle impenetrable to all who oppose Nadil. It's a formidable obstacle, but with the situation looking grim for all three Dragon Knights, hope arrives in two entirely unexpected places. As desperation sets in, an enemy will become a friend, and a former ally will return from the grave...

Mineko Ohkami

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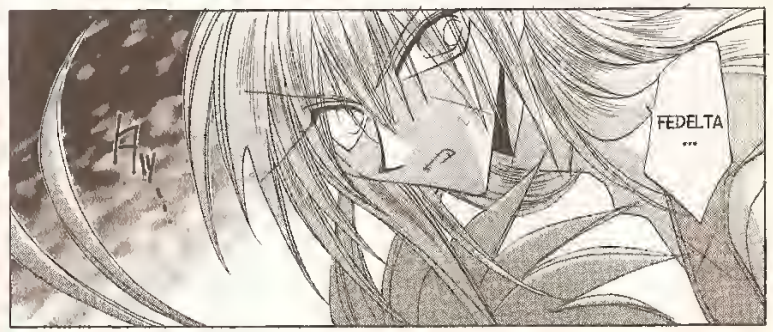

Dragon Knights 17 End